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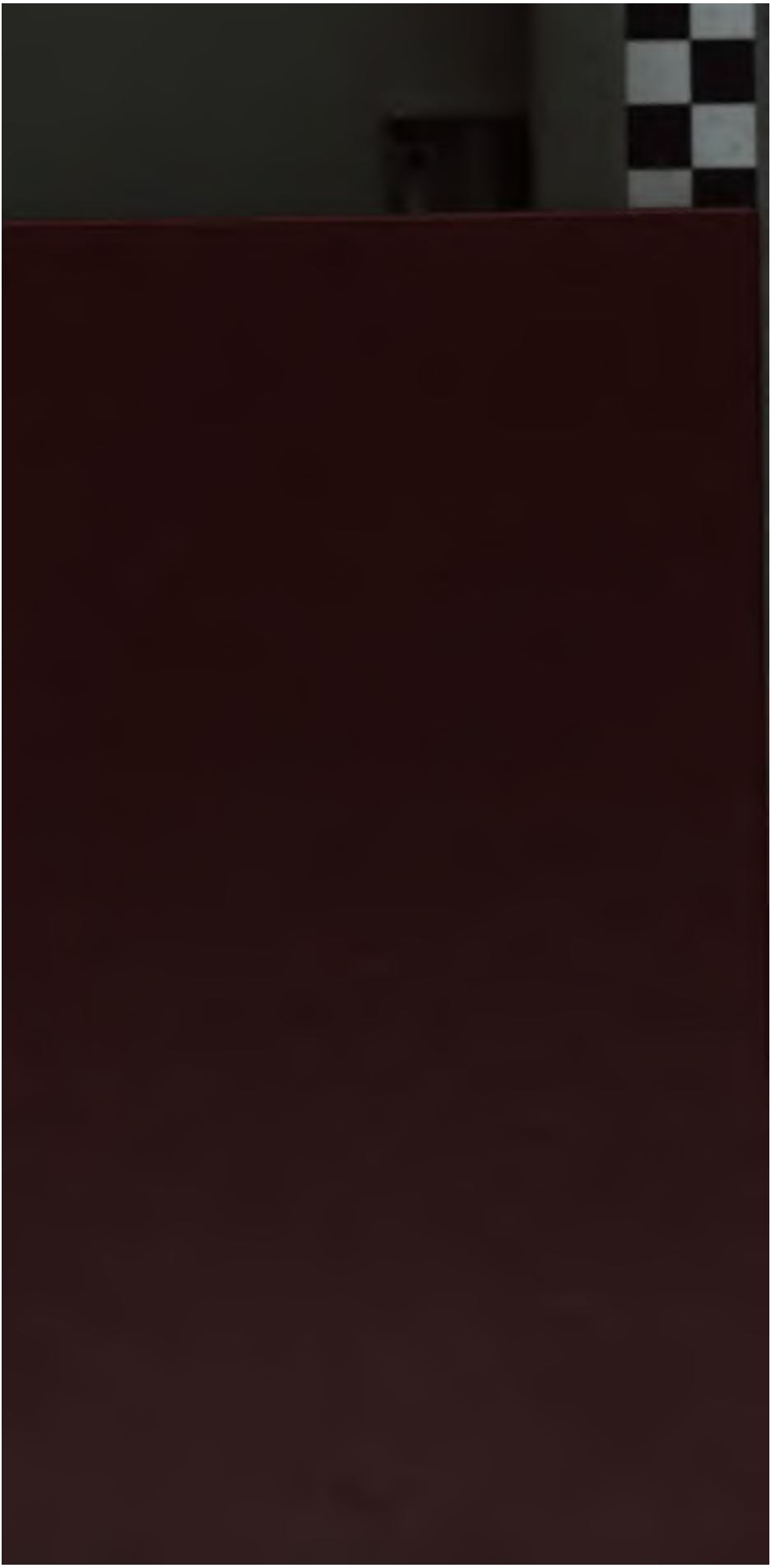
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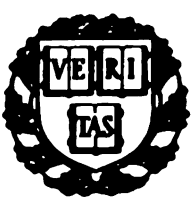
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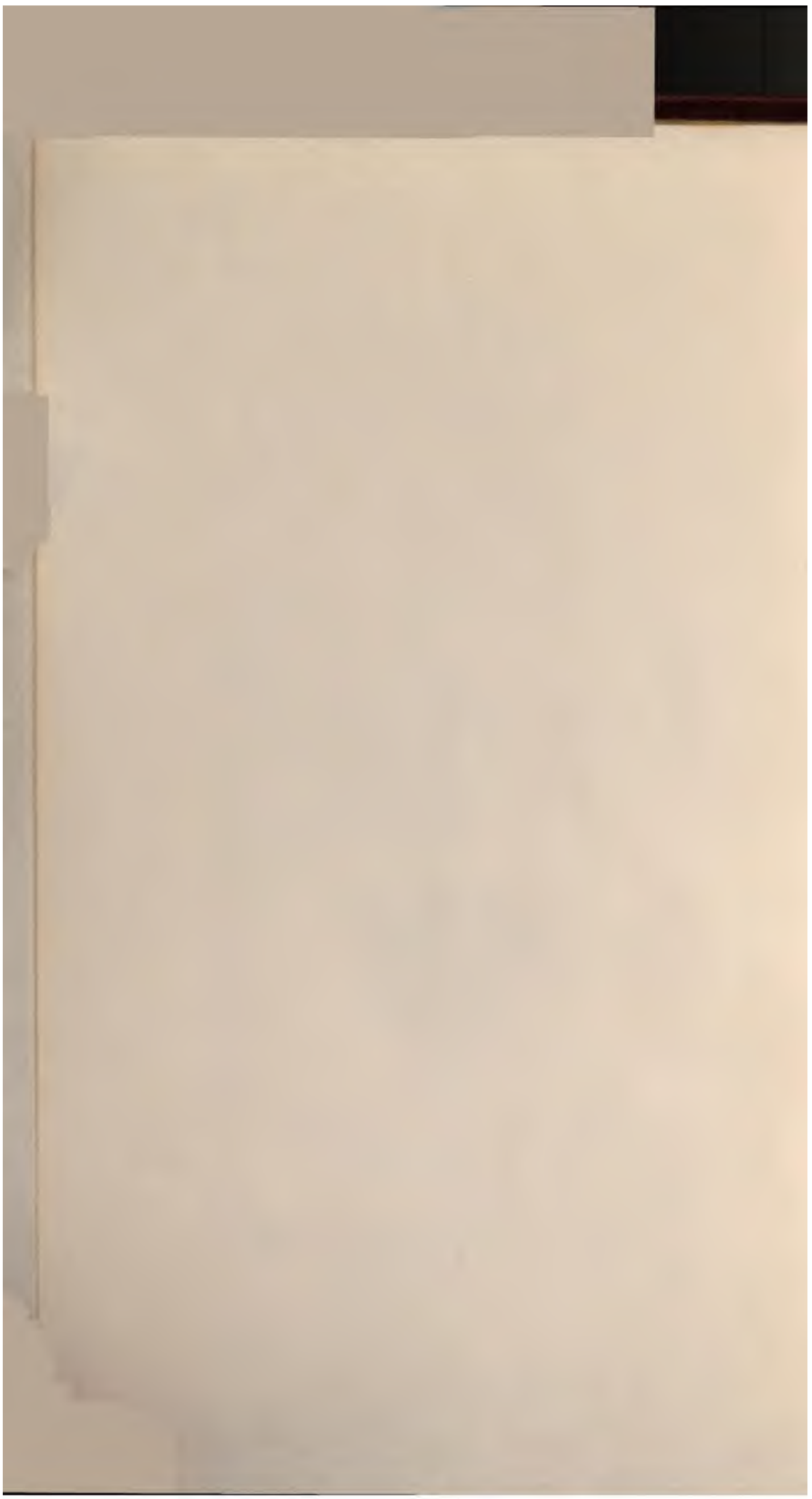
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HORIZONS





BY THE SAME AUTHOR:

IRELAND

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION

HORIZONS

A BOOK OF CRITICISM

By FRANCIS HACKETT



NEW YORK
B. W. HUEBSCH
MCMXVIII

1918



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INTRODUCTORY

It did not occur to me when I was writing these reviews that they might ever appear in a book. With one exception they were written week by week, either for the literary review of The Chicago Evening Post, 1908–1911, or for The New Republic 1914–1918; and most of them were written about current productions, books or plays. When I left Chicago in 1911, I thought, indeed, that I had done with book reviewing. I had slipped into the trade without any apprenticeship, drawn by love of it; and I left it because it seemed like writing in water. But one's past is the parent of one's future; I returned to it in 1914. When it was suggested to me that these reviews be reprinted I felt ashamed of them and wanted to rewrite them. They had been prepared at the moment for the moment, and I had the pleasant illusion that I could do better. But why, after all, I said to myself, should I long to come forward in full dress when it was my habit to go around in a tennis shirt? And so these reviews are reprinted with not twenty words changed.

My reason for not changing them is the obvious one that no revision could alter their character as plain field notes of criticism. The deeper criticism, as I see it, is managed in a different way. Far from being a dead art, as the professors so often

mistake it, it is an art of the living world and the living age, not less generous and sanguine because wise — but it does deviate from the common notion of spontaneity by considering principles rather than particular instances. If there is a study of pathology, for example, beyond and above the work of the general practitioner, there is also a study of criticism beyond and above the work of the reviewer, and the passion of the critic is not less real because less immediate. His is the kind of passion, generalizing from living particulars, that really molds the perception of an epoch. It calls for work spaciously planned and bravely carried on, with every art to serve it and its sights set for posterity. Its aspiration far surpasses the aspiration of the reviewer; it mingles with the schemes of statesmen and the dreams of poets. I understand and respect this work too well to confuse my own with it, or to wish any one to mistake my intention.

But I do not propose, on this account, to defer to the current American superstition that pedantry is the equivalent of ideas. To quote Simon Grynæus's preface to the Lyons Plato of 1548 may be the clinching blow of an argument; it may also be, it is much more likely to be, a bit of portentous nonsense. A critic should be a linguist, a philologist, a psychologist, a man who knows literary and æsthetic ideas as well as history, social and economic and political: but all of it is cold inanimation unless the flame of sympathy is touched to it. Criticism is an art limited by the capacity of the critic for emotion. Without rapport, there can be no criticism. In the newspaper world it is unnecessary to say this. In the newspaper world the clown is





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supposed to be as close to the marvel of Cleopatra as Antony himself. The newspapers look on the critical as persons who are unable to take a generous attitude toward life, puny persons, persons who fancy themselves, persons thin-blooded and finespun. They represent their own patrons as rugged, powerful, straightforward, good red blood in their veins. Silly as it is to have the herd traits exalted and imposed in this fashion, the contrary superstition of exclusiveness is more serious. My objection to the pedant is not based on the fact that he is excluding, but that his exclusiveness is cold, snobbish, sterile. If anything is clear in the history of men it is their pretentiousness. Prophets and kings and priests and judges, the guise of authority is myriad, its deceits multitudinous. To challenge authority may not be the last step toward liberty, but it is the first step, the step most disputed, the step most needed in dealing with reputable American criticism.

When literary demagogues appear, one must be prepared to resist them, but not at the cost of vitality that our professors of English literature have decreed. Whether or not the cause of the professors' feebleness is a buried "inferiority complex," as the analysts term it, the fact is patent; they do not savor the wine of literature until they see the orthodox date and the orthodox name on the orthodox cobwebbed bottle. Our universities are crowded with such teachers. They do not arouse and foster the feeling for literature, they thwart and kill it, and they have made the American college graduate a by-word for literary insensitiveness.

One of the great army of American newspaper book reviewers, my own aim has been to report the

emotions with which I have pursued my enterprise. The word emotion, I dare say, is suspect. Seeing what great cities are, and the havoc they play with attention and susceptibility, it cannot be denied that the quality of æsthetic judgment is subject to all sorts of contortion; and there are many elements which stimulate feeling which do not reside in the thing "itself." But however close one may be to the attenuated and denatured, the persons whose brains twitter in their skulls when taxed by any genuine effort, it is part of the task of criticism to keep independent, and the measure of my usefulness must be the degree to which my impressions are my own. If I sympathize with novelties, it is not for the sake of excitation, not for love of black flowers and green suns. It is because our age is once more a renaissance. The old Mother had her wisdom deep and disregarded; but she was an exacting Mother, peremptory, greedy, intrusive, anti-everything, and I am one of those who think she was only a step-mother in the mansion of life. I see back of her, in her creaking vestments, an older creature with wild eyes and scrabbling hands and battered dugs, a naked old thing called Nature who really bore me and who had been demeaned by this insolent intruder. Our renaissance promises to be a new understanding of nature, outside priests and kings and pedants. If I have caught any accent of it, I am fortunate. There can be no wise criticism that is unaware of the new world in travail.

NOVELS AND NOVELISTS, I



CORRECTNESS

TO the readers of The New York Nation Mr. Sherman's name is familiar as one of the few serious literary critics in the country. The articles in this volume have all appeared in The Nation, contributed from the professorial realm of Urbana, Illinois. How Urbana manages to keep Mr. Sherman is an academic mystery; but now that he has shown the amazing difference between words printed in a periodical and words collected in a book, the eyes of university trustees elsewhere ought to be wheeled upon him, and Urbana compelled to guard or to yield. Certainly few American university trustees can know their own business if they neglect a professor who does so well the thing that they most admire.

The essence of Mr. Sherman's criticism is American correctness, that bloodless correctness to which New England has given its wintry favor. Mr. Sherman is himself an Iowan, but he breathes New England and there is nothing of Iowa about him. He is a man of mind, grave, responsible and careful, never guilty of that exuberance which is so incompatible with a full considerateness, and determined not to bring forth any more ideas than he can perfectly pasteurize. But he is not wholly in a mould. An accomplished exponent of the native moralism, he does more than preserve his fine thin narrow preoccupation with righteousness. He insists on it, as

On Contemporary Literature, by Stuart P. Sherman. Holt, New York.

part of a grand counter-revolution, not only in his peregrinations through the unwholesome modernists, but also through the vulgar democracy of Mark Twain, the continent art of Arnold Bennett, the tolerated liberalism of Anatole France, the sunken laughter of John Synge, the "æsthetic idealism" of Henry James, the "humanism" of George Meredith — until he relaxes cautiously in the end, safe in the arms of Shakespeare. It is correctness rampant that makes Mr. Sherman's crest different from the ordinary heraldry; and the main delectation of his book is its conservative call to arms.

What is the issue? To Mr. Sherman himself it seems that it is the same great issue which underlies the war. If we are fighting the Germans because they have broken treaties and scouted honor and disregarded humanity, then we must also repudiate and cast out those mechanistic, monistic, scientific "naturalists" who have the same immorality as the Germans. The dragon of naturalism has drawn his filthy trail across our literature. We must slay the dragon. H. G. Wells, Theodore Dreiser, George Moore, even John Dewey, do not recognize certain rights and principles, but "humanity does after all recognize certain rights and principles as fixed and established," and therefore, by St. George, we must draw the shining sword. As Mr. Sherman sums it up, "the victory of the Allies should logically be reflected in a literature exalting the vindicated 'law for man.' Haunted by memories of the fiery ruin wrought by those who made lust and law alike in their decree, it should not seek in nature for the order, stability, justice, gentleness, and wisdom that only man has ever desired or sought to create. It

should mirror a society more regardful of its ascertained values, more reverent of its fine traditions, more reluctant to take up with the notions of windy innovators. It should, in short, suggest in its own subtle way the desirability of continuing to work out in the world that ideal pattern which lies in the instructed and disciplined heart."

This, we may take it, is a cri de coeur. Literature has suffered from the libertines, and literature, "in its own subtle way," must make amends by lifting us to a higher plane. As against the practices of those naturalists who would bring us to the level of the Germans it must, in the end, edify.

One might linger among the details of Mr. Sherman's conservatism. If he is setting out to show that "the old m- -al abstractions" mean nothing to Germany, for exan.le, he has his work cut out for him. The odium of scientific monism may be attached to certain ruthless Germans, especially German legalists, but you cannot start out to annex such a convenient equipment as the old moral abstractions without hearing a loud squawk from the Kaiser. The trouble is, Mr. Sherman's counter-revolution has in it a preposterous amount of that German specialty, "instinctive obedience"; and, as he says himself, "we have trusted our instincts long enough to sound the depths of their treacherousness." But the fact that German junkers hate "windy innovators" quite as much as Mr. Sherman does, and that official Germany equally adores the "ideal pattern," does not go to the heart of the matter. The heart of the matter, so far as understanding Mr. Sherman is concerned, does seem to be in recognizing his profound conviction that life is

in no sense an experiment, is in reality an ingenious examination paper set by God in conjunction with Matthew Arnold. "Stemming the tide of natural impulse"— that is one great way to reach the right solution. Also believing that "society is in great part an organized opposition to nature." The high principle is Arthurian self-control.

It is a permanent question, this one of the libertinism of all radicals, the morality of all stand-patters. But where G. K. Chesterton has proved himself an artist in the ways of counter-revolution is in his public espousal of beer. By establishing his relationship with Falstaff, by talking like an obstreperous brewery-drayman, Mr. Chesterton has left no doubt that when he says "restraint" there is actually something to restrain. If Mr. Chesterton were to say, "It is of the essence of a man to lay down his life out of reverence for his great-grandfather," you would feel that he was incurably romantic and would hope that his wife and family could keep him from being hurt. But when Mr. Sherman says it, and he does say it, you feel not altogether serious. No one ought to have a great-grandfather fit to mention in either Iowa or Illinois. And when Mr. Sherman talks of restraint, you contemplate his one terrific outburst of violence, "If I may be pardoned a violent expression, Mr. Wells would like to slay all the Victorians." Restraint, on these pure lips, implies something that the intoxicated Gilbert did not intend. You feel at once that it is something *you* have, not something he himself has, that Mr. Sherman wants to restrain. Yours, of course, is the tide of natural impulse that he is longing to stem.

And so we find it. He admires Mark Twain,



feels like explaining the great barbarian to the "saving remnant," rejoices in his "domestic rectitude and common morality," but he is queasy about Mark Twain's "savory earthiness," "golden mediocrities," "undisciplined strength." He sees Mark Twain as reckless, prodigal, garrulous, uproarious, naïve, homely, arrogantly candid, impudent, not fine, not profound, "not a drop of the aristocrat in his veins." He yearns in connection with Mark Twain toward "the discipline of an older and firmly stratified society." It may not seem a grudging reference, but the fact that Mark Twain ridiculed pure art like Jane Austen and The Vicar of Wakefield sticks endlessly in his teacher's crop, and he actually dares to dismiss masterpieces like Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn as "almost entirely delightful."

It is the intimidation of another positive vitality that impairs H. G. Wells for Mr. Sherman. He likens Wells to Rousseau, to the godless Shelley. He blames him for irregularity. He calls him a "zoölogical moralist" because Wells does not see that "in the course of some thousands of years of civilized society the elementary principles of conduct have been adequately tested, and are now to be unequivocally accepted. They constitute a standard of 'right reason' outside themselves, to which we should vigorously subject our treacherous individual sensibilities." And, if you please, Mr. Sherman recalls the cant that training in the sciences leaves "the moral nature undisciplined and inclined to caprice and eccentricity," as if Darwin, Huxley, Lyell, Tyndall, had not shown the world, precisely in the sphere of moral nature, what magnificent beings English scientists could be. This miserable little

slander is on a par with identifying H. G. Wells's advocacy of "efficiency" with the Belgic "efficiency" of Germany, classing Mr. Wells with ruthless "imperially-minded men." You might as well say that Benjamin Franklin was a Prussian because he favored punctuality, or that Mrs. Bill Jones is a materialist because she employs a carpet-sweeper. And, indeed, when one explores the prejudice against "naturalism," when one sees the humble pot-boilers of Arnold Bennett hailed as rare sanity and sobriety, there is almost no argument that does not seem possible in this battle against fearful odds.

But the supreme perversion in Mr. Sherman's book is too full of savory heavenliness not to be quoted. It is his exhibit in the case of The Brook Kerith's indecency.

"It is shortly after the descent from the cross and during the convalescence that the following conversation takes place:

"'Joseph asked, not because he was interested in dog breeding, but to make talk, if the puppies were mongrels. Mongrels, Jesus repeated overlooking them; not altogether mongrels, three-quarter bred; the dog that begot them was a mongrel, half-Syrian, half Tracian. I've seen worse dogs highly prized. Send the bitch to a dog of pure Tracian stock and thou'lt get some puppies that will be the sort that I used to seek.'

"This is not the most nor the least quotable of the innumerable passages by which our ingenious author gives to his narrative a kind of sex-interest in which the gospel story is quite deficient."

A clearer example of pruriency it would be hard to find. "We of the English race," as Mr. Sher-



man puts it, may be quite right to " resist Moore — though he is a pretty writer — to save Shakespeare, whom, on the whole, year in and year out, we prefer." But granted that there is a sinister movement on foot to dethrone Shakespeare in favor of George Moore, and that Moore ought to be heroically resisted by " us of the English race," still when Moore wanted to refer to sex he never did fall back on so quaint a subterfuge as hinting that Jesus knew a little about breeding dogs.

As between low vitality and high vitality there is no reason why high vitality should be a bully's. H. G. Wells and Theodore Dreiser are by no means exquisitely sensitive to the rights that they depict as betrayed. But this business of " stemming the tide of natural impulse " converts a critic into a nursery-maid, and puts men of genius in a perambulator that is several sizes too small. Mr. Sherman calls himself a humanist. He thinks Mr. Wells is a dangerous faun and Mr. Dreiser a satyr and Mr. Moore a half-animal of obscene ways. But what he really resents in these men is their irregular insistence on " treacherous individual sensibilities." They have disregarded what he considers " the first duty of man, which is to perpetuate in and through himself the moral life of the race."

Is the criterion of that moral life to be Mr. Sherman's correctness, and is any such correctness the proper touchstone of art? Not even his measured praise of George Meredith and his sensitive appreciation of Henry James can buttress such egregious rules. It might be an excellent thing for the United States if a clear division were made between the sheep and the goats of criticism. On the side of

the sheep, as Mr. Sherman sees it, there would be a collection of eminent names — Paul Elmer More, W. C. Brownell, Professor Babbitt; and, I suppose, Brander Matthews, Barrett Wendell and Mr. Sherman. But before this division can be accepted, with all the eternal verities falling on the side of the sheep, Mr. Sherman must do better in the way of an offensive than disapproving of contemporary vitality. When Shakespeare was contemporary, the mandarins frowned on him. When George Meredith first appeared he was hounded. It took Mark Twain a generation to get the slightest professorial recognition. With such examples of timidity, why counsel timidity? Mr. Sherman preaches a forlorn gospel when he begs us to cower behind the moral life of the race to peer at art.

January 12, 1918.

WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS

A CRITICAL study of William Dean Howells is needed in America. Mr. Harvey thinks that the lack of it is due to British literary superstition. Mr. Howells, he believes, has not been highly, or highly enough, esteemed in London, and the English underestimation has been slavishly adopted here. Whether this is the true cause or not, the fact is indisputable. The most eminent man of letters in the United States is not half so well established in the literary consciousness of our present generation as any one of a dozen Englishmen.

American criticism, such as it is, has done very little for our leading novelist. There are Continental writers, indeed, thanks partly to Mr. Howells himself, whose work and whose personality arouse a desire that is incommensurably greater than the desire which he arouses. For all the exciting literary recommendation that is so common in America the tone about Mr. Howells, with a few thrilling exceptions, is exceedingly mild. He is installed in good repute. He is circulated. He is eulogized. He is honored. But he is not treated as a positive living force. The reasons for this, considering his eminence, are worth inquiry, since American criticism has long owed it to his genius to do something toward breaking up its merely ceremonial attitude.

William Dean Howells, by Alexander Harvey. Huebsch, New York.

Clever and admiring as Mr. Harvey's book is, it does not satisfactorily avail itself of the opportunity that William Dean Howells afforded. Mr. Harvey selects important aspects of Mr. Howells's work for lively and assertive advocacy, but it is abundantly clear from the start that Mr. Howells is a point of departure rather than a goal. Like a caged canary that catches a sound only to burst into his own song, Mr. Harvey listens to Howells only to break forth about the Philistinism of Boston, the frustration of Charles Francis Adams, the erotic symbolism of Edgar Allan Poe. It makes a suggestive book, but it neglects the case in point. An arduous task confronted Mr. Harvey. There were not only the thirty-odd novels to consider, but farces and comedies and books of travel and criticism and reminiscence making a total of nearly a hundred volumes, all coming from a man whose recollection spans half the life of the Republic. There was a critical study to be made not only of the production that Mr. Howells has achieved, but of the national substance from which it came. It must be said that in being loosely oracular and discursive, instead of attentive, Mr. Harvey has missed his hour.

The special nature of woman seems to be a subject of compelling interest to Mr. Harvey, for example, and he insists on looking to Mr. Howells's novels for a satisfaction of this proclivity. But Mr. Howells is the wrong person for a man with such an objective. It is like going to Chicago for the lotos. There is something to be said for the contention that, " from the standpoint of literature regarded as a fine art, I consider The Rise of Silas Lapham the greatest novel ever written. . . . In

the matter of form, structure, style, whatever we choose to call that part of the novelist's equipment which reveals him as an artist, this tale of the Laphams is more finished than the masterpieces of Flaubert." But there is very little to be said for the violent contention that "it is a tale of the love of Irene for Tom and of Tom for Penelope, every development of the plot being critical to us because it bears, in a manner near or remote, upon that intense affair. I have been unable to call to mind a novel in which the sentiment, indeed the passion of love has been steeped in so unsparing a realism with such an intimate knowledge of the subject matter. . . . The most remarkable feature of The Rise of Silas Lapham is that it has two heroines."

Is Mr. Harvey entirely sincere in proffering this novel as another Romeo and Juliet? It has the intense interest of Tom and Irene and Penelope. The unmerited misery of Irene and of Penelope, the fire underneath such a simple phrase as, "Penelope Lapham, have you been such a ninny as to send that man away on my account?"— these things do make it a passionately human love story. But "the mystery of pain and loss" is in nowise confined to the girls. Mrs. Lapham "had never heard of the fate that was once supposed to appoint the sorrows of men irrespective of their blamelessness or blame, before the time when it came to be believed that sorrows were penalties; but in her simple way she recognized something like that mythic power when she rose from her struggle with the problem, and said aloud to herself, 'Well, the witch is in it.'" That fate afflicts Silas as well as Irene, and in the rise and fall of Silas Lapham, in his promotion to pros-

perity, in his collision with a different order of civilities, there is an epic which is subsidiary to nothing else. So accurate is the delineation of Back Bay that impatient Bostonians say: "But we know all that." It is the main achievement of this novel that it drives us to realize the inexorable necessity and the equally inexorable cruelty of exclusiveness, social and sexual, in direct proportion as we have imagination. If we suppose that the statement of these cruel necessities is a matter of no moment to Mr. Howells and comes from a juxtaposition caught by the accident of the camera, we naturally conclude that The Rise of Silas Lapham is merely a bit of skillful representation and we have no emotions about it except for its virtuosity. But such a supposition of detachment is too naïve. Silas Lapham is alpine with the inflections its author has given it.

It is a great novel especially, as Mr. Harvey says, because of the relevancy of its material, the æsthetic consequence of its arrangement. Take any little passage like this: "Penelope began hastily to amend the disarray of her hair, which she tumbled into a mass on the top of her little head, setting off the pale dark of her complexion with a flash of crimson ribbon at her throat. She moved across the carpet once or twice with the quaint grace that belonged to her small figure, made a dissatisfied grimace at it in the glass, caught a handkerchief out of a drawer and slid it into her pocket, and then descended to Corey." Has this the remorseless inclusion, the jejune literalness, of a photograph? It is faithful to fact in the sense that it conveys Penelope to us by letting us see her in movement, but it

is a picture suffused with feeling, feeling for her charm, her characteristic gesture, her humorous self-consciousness, her daintiness. Contrast this "realism" with a conventional verbal portrait: "So, in the blinding glare of cloudless morning, under the dark, overarching orange trees, on a street, narrow, dirty, and anything but straight, they met. The tall, well-knit young man in quiet, close-fitting brown, was small-faced, with clear, gray-blue eyes, a hooked nose, and pink, boyish cheeks. The man, rubicund all over an ample countenance, his eyes watery gray, his surface suety, his outline pear-shaped, wore a loose, flapping suit of soiled, spotty, snuff-streaked black." It is only persons having no particular feeling for literary art who can go astray about the deceptive simplicity and artlessness of Mr. Howells — an "artlessness" which this real artlessness reveals.

And yet on this very point Mr. Harvey goes hopelessly astray. In his chapter on the limitations of Mr. Howells he says,

> His novels, his novelettes, his experiments with the short story, his farces, his criticisms never take us to the depths of anything. There are, he seems to say again and again, no depths. Life is a surface. . . . He is like those older psychologists who kept us so carefully within the limits of consciousness that they never suspected the existence of the subconscious. The matter might be put in a different fashion by noting that the genius of Howells is objective and not in the least subjective. He can tell us with subtle observation what Grace Green said when she confessed her love, how she looked, the way she raised her arms and what she wore. He never dares to say what went on within her

soul. How could he ever know the subconscious? In avoiding all that he avoids likewise the symptoms or the depths of passion, its essence, as the poet might say.

And again,

To tell the truth it is impossible to read the literature of the psycho-analytic school of Freudian psychology without marveling at the completeness with which the whole fabric of the Howells criticism collapses and disintegrates. It is all surface and no depth. . . . These people [the native Americans of Anglo-Saxon origin] have never explored life subjectively. The American subconsciousness is to all intents and purposes a sealed book. . . . Howells is a reporter — a reporter of genius, to repeat, a humorist of the rarest gifts, an artist with words, but still a reporter.

What Mr. Harvey means by "objective" is not clear. Take such a novel as A Modern Instance; it is so little confined to reporting that it is actually and almost specifically a morality. We witness the steady deterioration of Bartley Hubbard, "the decay of whatever was right-principled in him." The novelist is not detached. He takes sides against his villain and stigmatizes his "corrupt nature." When Marcia has Bartley in her arms on the eve of their fated wedding, before the discrepancy in their desires is completely manifest, Mr. Howells does not aim for one moment to remain a reporter.

". . . if only you would let me take back —"

"Yes," he answered dreamily. All that wicked hardness was breaking up within him; he felt it melting drop by drop in his heart. This poor, love-tossed soul, this frantic, unguided, reckless girl, was an angel of mercy to him, and in her folly and error a messenger of heavenly peace and hope. . . . She took his head between her hands and



pressed it hard against her heart, and then wrapped her arms tight about him, and softly bemoaned him.

If Mr. Harvey had not himself derived a "Howells philosophy of women" from the novels, it might be necessary to insist further that Mr. Howells is more than a reporter, has indeed that "precious insight" into the heart of life that is a synonym for psychology.

Insofar as Mr. Howells was weaned from his Germanic strain and caught the New England spiritual accent, he shared, I should imagine, in the volitional pessimism, the voluptuous sense of sin, of his adopted community. "The wish to be sincere, the wish to be just, the wish to be righteous," he himself puts it, "are before the wish to be kind, merciful, humble. A people are not a chosen people for half a dozen generations without acquiring a spiritual pride that remains with them long after they cease to believe themselves chosen." In his later books Mr. Howells is so genial, so indulgent, so lambent, one cannot associate him with the New England righteousness, but in A Modern Instance he is a little more sure of Bartley Hubbard's baseness than he has any right to be. In the father's jealousy of his daughter's husband, so faithfully depicted, there is an unsuspected morbid element that would have set poor Mr. Gaylord by the ears. And then there is that nasty-nice self-concerned righteousness of Halleck. ("Don't you see that his being in love with her when she was another man's wife is what he feels it to be — an indelible stain? . . . There was a time when he would have been glad to profit by a divorce." Atherton shares Halleck's guilty feeling

about this phenomenon of love without a marriage license.) More knowledge of the unconscious would undoubtedly have kept Mr. Howells from being quite so disedified by the Bartley Hubbards, quite so impressed by the Calvinistic contortionists.

One has only to read that extraordinary book, A Boy's Town, to discover Mr. Howells's constitutional shyness. He was destined to be impressed by New England, by anything that presented itself as having a special worthiness to which he hardly dared aspire. It is as if he had always lived under the ægis of a frowning deity, had the heart to be adventurously gay, but was too devout to discount those evidences of a reproving godhead that enveloped him. A sweet reasonableness comes in the end to pervade his work, and he is never without a continent humor, but there is a deference in the early days, particularly to stuffy Bostonians, which makes one ache for him. "It is good for the literary aspirant," he says in his pleasant way, "to realize very early that he is but one of many, for the vice of our comparatively virtuous craft is that it tends to make each of us imagine himself central, if not sole. As a matter of fact, however, the universe does not revolve around any one of us; we make our circuit of the sun along with the other inhabitants of the earth, a planet of inferior magnitude. The thing we strive for is recognition, but when this comes it is apt to turn our heads. I should say, then, that it was better it should not come in a great glare and a loud shout, all at once, but should steal slowly upon us, ray by ray, breath by breath." And so on. It is excellent counsel for most men, but Mr. Howells obeyed it too well himself. He was al-

ways ready to spoil others with recognition, "Mr. James or Miss Jewett, Kielland or Björnson, Maupassant, Palacio Valdés, Giovanni Verga, Tourguénief." For himself he claimed nothing. It is, as it now appears, lamentable. Beautiful as is the considerateness that distinguishes Mr. Howells, delicate as is his apprehension of every other personality, utterly reliable as is his democracy, scrupulous as is his virtue, there is a retardation of impulse, for all his productiveness, which afflicts one like the thought of living in a land of perpetual cloud. And yet there is never any dullness because of his subordination of impulse. "After seeing Mme. Bernhardt's Hamlet no one can altogether liberate himself from the fancy that the Prince of Denmark was a girl of uncertain age, with crises of mannishness in which she did not seem quite a lady." Mr. Howells never loses his capacity for this kind of critical amusement, whatever his American circumspection.

Where Mr. Howells is circumspect in a national sense it is rather with reference to the human herd than to any social class or any political order. The undemocratic irony of poverty he never forgets. "Where, in what business of this hard world, is not prosperity built upon the struggle of toiling men, who still endeavor their poor best, and writhe and writhe under the burden of their brothers above, till they lie under the lighter load of their mother earth?" Not on such an issue as war is he deferential. His disgust for war, "that melancholy and humiliating necessity of war," its "monstrous inconsequence," is similarly unsparing and candid and free. The circumspection he shows is, as it were,

projected out of the representative witenagemot that his conscience and his taste provide. So close is he to his kind, he is humanely colored lest he upset them, and however he may disagree with them, even passionately, he observes certain conditions of brotherhood, or tribal gregariousness. The subtleties of this national circumspection are too easily ignored by Mr. Harvey. It is certainly not the finest moral contrivance there is, but it is the most significant contrivance of the age Mr. Howells has represented and it calls for keen and close and sympathetic interpretation.

The task of interpreting Mr. Howells still awaits American criticism. So faithful and disinterested an artist as himself has stored up treasures of national consciousness which will gain in value as time goes on. There is nothing about him, not even the oppressed patience which seems so large a part of his goodness, that vitiates his artistic being. He is the one American figure on whom literary criticism has failed to focus as it should, and from whose large intentions and richly freighted performances too few national writers have renewed themselves.

April 21, 1917.

MRS. WHARTON'S ART

MRS. WHARTON comes very near giving complete gratification with this volume of short stories. She takes her subjects as only an artist can take them, for the values, the resonances, they happen to have for her; and the fact that she writes mainly of a restricted class seems at the moment irrelevant. It would be really irrelevant if Mrs. Wharton didn't, in a subtle enough way, become condescending to persons who live on, and off, the fringe. Sometimes as between a perfectly initiated pet and a bounding newcomer one gets a whiff of sublimated sensibilities. Of such assaulted class consciousness as this sort of thing implies, Mrs. Wharton occasionally gives signs. Among the petty bourgeoisie she moves with comparative sympathy. Among more formidable representatives of the same ilk she moves with something not unlike a sniff. She is difficult to please, but the difficulty is not always due to intrinsic considerations. For a person of such lancing intelligence she is strangely deficient in comedy. It is not that one wants her to have a richer palette or a more dashing line. It is not that one wishes her to burst on the world exuberantly, with a yawp. It is merely that with a higher sense of comedy other realities would emerge in her landscape which, un-

Xingu, and other stories, by Edith Wharton. Scribners, New York.

der the light that is habitual with her, is somewhat acid, cold and bleak.

But astringent as one may deem Mrs. Wharton's mood, it would be absurd to miss her deep excellences on that account. There are many manifestations of America for which she has not the faculty, but those that peculiarly arrest her, those that depend on being of the feminine gender among well-off people in a given time and sphere extract from her the sort of appreciation that amounts to genius. The fate that she has most absorbingly contemplated and most handsomely represented is perhaps that of persons whose lot is enhanced by money or family or taste, and whose impulses pay reluctant toll to an order in whose establishment their happiness and their honor are involved. It is, if you like, worldly wisdom that here occupies Mrs. Wharton; it happens however, to be wisdom. Congruous as she is with Scribner's Magazine, incongruous with the Walt Whitmans, she is still the intent observer of nature adaptive and assertive, of pliancies and subjections, desertions and rebellions. In some respects she is a pharmacist in her handling of vital forces. She deals in essences and double distillations. She uses a delicate measure to weigh out what is precious or deadly. She dispenses little that she regards as lethal or valuable outside of what would fit in an apothecary scales. She is grave, minute, scrupulous, analytic. She is dramatic hypodermically. But to such fine uses does she put the sympathies and perceptions with which she is endowed, that a reader would be strangely callous who was not lost in admiration among the merits of her art.



Take as perhaps the best example in this volume the tale called The Long Run. It is a favorite theme of Mrs. Wharton's, the drama of a love that is not coincident with marriage. In this case, as indeed in most of the stories in Xingu, Mrs. Wharton is seeing these things in retrospect, not as matters of palpitation so much as matters of eventual chemistry. The man in this instance harks back to his hour of decision, the hour when everything depended on the driving force of his impulse as against her husband's preëmption. She is willing to go out with her lover, she has no sense of having been preempted. She knows that to her husband she is furniture, that there are no "reasons — honest reasons — for staying there." This woman at the lift of the flashing sunny wave can invite her lover to it. "The first great anatomist was the man who stuck his knife in a heart that was beating; and the only way to find out what doing a thing will be like is to do it!" The male in the man, orthodox in possessiveness, refuses. She cannot swim, he sees it, except in the lifebelt of matrimony. And what that decision came to, in the perspective of his own resignation and her later re-marriage, is the story Mrs. Wharton beautifully and sympathetically contrives. They are not people seen in the various successive attitudes of a morality, registering this and that. They are people whose morality is in solution, never labeled for that particular brand of interest by Mrs. Wharton herself. She has no intention for them save to reveal them, to give them in their own "flood of joy that comes of heightened emotion," their own persuasions as to life, and the price it cost them to have had him incapable of cross-

ing a stream that had no bridge. A story like this is the flower of a career.

Permeated with equal sympathy, rather a dejected and vengeful sympathy, is Bunner Sisters, a fascinating novelette of two middle-aged tradeswomen in old New York. The odor of condescension does not, for me, cling to this example of Mrs. Wharton's studies in a sphere not excitingly fashionable. There are inflections she catches with sharp exactness. There is no attempt to make Ann Eliza and Evelina seem less like morons than they really were. But the story has an almost affectionate completeness of detail and a totally affectionate occupation with both Ann Eliza and Evelina in the bitter-sweet of their intimacy with the fated Mr. Ramy. The Bunners do not come off very well, defenseless in a fight so manifold and so complicated as life; but they are not exceptional. In not one of Mrs. Wharton's eight stories does any one come off particularly well, except of course the potential murderer in Triumph of Night and the brute-husband in The Choice.

Xingu is perhaps the cleverest of these stories. It is also the least valuably perceptive. A satire on the excessive seriousness, the pretentiousness, the false zealotry of a small American "culture" club, it goes rather too far in an acrimonious caricature of the women as human beings. Mrs. Wharton's acid bites fairly into their idiocy as the pursuers of culture, it scarifies them too deeply in their social character. The Laura Glyde and Mrs. Plinth and Mrs. Leveret of real life would be equally insufferable about books, but Mrs. Wharton's cold dislike for their nature is quite unjustified. It is in

dealing with such women as these, women who if anything would err on the side of amiability and whose main mistake is to take too seriously the obligations imposed on them by a culture not native, that Mrs. Wharton becomes frigidly conventional. Her Mrs. Plinths and Mrs. Leverets are misjudged from the vantage point of Lenox or Tuxedo, or wherever it is that women do not allow even their illiteracy to detract from their self-confidence.

Despite Bunner Sisters, it would be egregious loyalty to Mrs. Wharton as an artist not to admit that she is primarily a person interested in a restricted world. She has an ear for the clash and chime of life outside Lenox and those other places where ministers of grace draw your bath and steal about, exaggerating your wardrobe, while you pretend to be asleep. Her story of wartime in the Vosges and the German intrusion on a château there indicates that. But it is not too much to say that she tends to start with men of means and women who use their means to their ends. One has only to glance at her personæ — Horace Pursh, Halston Merrick, Susy Suffern, Harriet Fresbie, Wilbour Barkley, Austin Wrayford, Cobham Stilling, Philip Trant, Mrs. Lidcote, Mrs. Lorin Boulger, H. Macy Greer, Franklin Ide, Jim Cumnor. These are not the kind of people with whom you share crackerjack in a day-coach. These are not the lads and lassies who put skids under William H. Taft in 1912, abandoned themselves to Onward Christian Soldiers, at Chicago, and helped Mr. Roosevelt to be a traitor to his class. Rather the contrary. But on the Atlantic sea-board, using the Alleghenies as a sort of privet hedge, Mrs. Wharton holds these

persons in preference — out of proportion to their constituency in society as a whole though not by any means out of proportion to their interest. For their interest, as Mrs. Wharton considers them, is not a fatuous fashionableness. It is the chance they offer for intensive human relations, those relations that include love, but also so often preclude it, and always pivoting on marriage. Marriage and love are the great factors in the drama Mrs. Wharton concentrates upon. Of these the greater, in the frankly middle-aged stories in Xingu, is neither one nor the other automatically; she is cool enough to say that the cost of love may be too heavy, and warm enough to have its balance sheet her main preoccupation. It is this absorption in the delicate processes, the feminized processes, which decide where the bemedaled warriors shall dine, and whom sit next to, and whom take to wife and whom to bed, that has kept her up-town and socially excited. The quality of that excitement is the principal charm of Xingu, an achievement that no other American is emulating.

February 10, 1917.

MRS. WHARTON'S LIMITATIONS

NO novelist so accomplished as Mrs. Wharton could fail to write a personable story, but there is air of falsity about this new invention of hers that arouses a good deal of interest. The idiom, so far as an outsider may guess, is quite true to New England. At the proper moment the girl, Charity says, "I want you should leave me," and one hears a human voice. The background is intimately observed, so that one sees the clean structure of New England houses of many types, and is constantly aware of the dominant Mountain from whose lawlessness Charity was redeemed into North Dormer, to look forward to that sexual limbo which rewards New England virtue. The sweet airs of New England summer fields and woods give a crispness and charm to those pages over which Mrs. Wharton lingers most affectionately, and the contrast of a hot holiday throng in a fair-sized neighboring town is prosecuted with all of her lynx-like sharpness. It is certainly not in these respects that the story can be said to be false.

The theme to which Mrs. Wharton gives such circumstantialities is no more alien to her, so far as intelligent comprehension goes, than the idiom and the background themselves. It is one of those stories of the inexorable that seem perfectly to lend themselves to Mrs. Wharton's icy restraint. If you

Summer, by Edith Wharton. Scribners, New York.

want to get a region in which inexorability of the moral order has a whacking good time, you do not have to go to New England. George Eliot, as I seem to remember from terrified perusal at the age of fourteen, made the mills of the gods grind with the usual insufficiency of car-grease in the Italy of Romola and Tito. When it came to the inexorable in the classics, Greece was its favorite locale. Before that time the land of Job was its eminent home — and, if one is going to be open-handed in this respect, what's the matter with Wessex as the scene of cursèd spite? But while New England has no exclusive proprietorship in the grim-inexorable, there is no doubt that the specific gravity of human conduct is deemed higher in that estimable region than in any other region habitable by the serious story-teller. Mrs. Katherine Fullerton Gerould goes one better than Mrs. Wharton when she wants inexorability. She also resorts to New Englanders but she transplants them to Mocha or Java or Guatemala and serves them up with a little Golden Bough-wow. This mixture of strange and familiar gods jags one's nerves in a delightful manner, but there is a certain incontrovertible safety and sanity about harsh moral laws as they operate in New England, and Mrs. Wharton's instinct is perfectly sound when she proceeds to exhibit the inexorable doing business at the same old stand.

The trouble with Summer, however, is that Mrs. Wharton rather forces her note. It is not that seduction as a scheme for literary bouleversement is a little out of date. There is no such thing as a catastrophe too trite to be worth reciting. It is only that Mrs. Wharton, always inclined to be sub-hu-

man, is much too callous in the uses to which she has put this seduction. She has seen with that frigid eye of hers what an excellent chance there would be, against the background of an outlaw Mountain, to show a child adopted into the prim village violating the code of the village, being utterly incapable of enduring the squalor of the outlawry from which she sprang, and being ruthlessly mangled between the stark cliff that rejects her and the waves that fling her blindly against it. This scene of the pitiless, the inevitable, the inexorable, has special attractions for Mrs. Wharton's peculiar temperament. It is not that she is so full of pity, like Thomas Hardy, that she cannot remove her eyes from the spectacle of hapless shipwreck. It is not that she is so full of lifebuoy morality, like George Eliot, that she cannot help taking a coastguard interest in these perilous situations. It is more that she cannot help realizing the grisly effectiveness of seeing a fair skiff riding in on the waves of those forces that dominate life, and wrecked for one's fascinated eyes. The wreck may be merely to a dream, the insubstantial fabric of a vision, but the authenticity of that wreck, the bedevilment of the vision, give a glow to the specialist in frustration that occupies a part of Mrs. Wharton's soul.

A good shipwreck, moral or physical, is by no means the least satisfactory of fictional themes, but no author has a right to run up and down the shore line waving a harmless heroine to destruction. What one dislikes in Summer is the undoubted purpose of the author to dish the heroine for the sake of the sensation of dishing her. One really suffers on account of the pace at which Mrs. Wharton hur-

ries over the poignancy of a human record to arrive at a cruel predicament. The feeling is certainly established before the end that as a human being Charity Royall is nothing to her author, is merely a creature to be substantiated in detail in order that a dramatic sensation can be properly pulled off, and the curtain rung down before a breathless audience. The scene itself is not just an ingredient in Mrs. Wharton's contrivance, and the youth, Lucius Harney, is not dislocated for the purposes of the story. But the primitive mountaineers, Charity's guardian lawyer, Royall, who wants to marry her, the fierce pride of Charity, the vague "other girl" in the offing to whom the seducer is engaged, are all factors in an arrangement, a scheme, which has none of that generous human preoccupation about it which is needed to win the credence of the reader. Mrs. Wharton wants the credence of the reader, but she proposes to earn it by authoritative manner, not by any simple method of humane contagion. The result is a falsity that is scarcely accountable in an artist so acute.

Where this is most evident is in the perfunctory treatment of those situations in the life of Charity Royall that most ask one to put oneself in her place. There is, for example, the occasion on which this girl, in love with the young architect who has come for the summer to North Dormer, overhears her guardian disclose to him the secret she has never guessed of her disgraceful parentage.

"My God, how ghastly," Harney murmured; and Charity, choking with humiliation, sprang to her feet and ran upstairs. She knew at last: knew that she was the child of



a drunken convict and of a woman who wasn't "half-human," and was glad to have her go; and she had heard this history of her origin related to the one being in whose eyes she longed to appear superior to the people about her! . . . It was too bitter to picture him as the detached impartial listener to such a story. "I wish he'd go away: I wish he'd go to-morrow, and never come back!" she moaned to her pillow; and far into the night she lay there, in the disordered dress she had forgotten to take off, her whole soul a tossing misery on which her hopes and dreams spun about like drowning straws.

This is a curiously superficial and mechanical account of a heroine's crisis. Girls do moan to their pillows, of course, and lie disordered far into the night. But assassination of a hope would create a more bitter fever than this. Imagine Mr. Howells, restrained as he really is, offering these few hackneyed and jejune phrases as part of a spiritual history. The fact is, Mrs. Wharton needed Charity Royal's unfortunate ancestry in her business as a story-teller, but the effect of disclosing what in reality was nothing more than a literary convenance, she could not take too seriously.

Because of this and other failures in sympathy and plausibility, Summer cannot be set to the right side of Mrs. Wharton's account. The predicament of the girl who loves more than she is loved is intensely valid, the social situation of a girl whose child is to be born out of marriage is the most crucial and difficult in the world. But Mrs. Wharton has arranged for Charity's misfortune too deliberately, deprived her of aid too sweepingly, afforded her marriage with her guardian too simply, to be known as an artist in handling this great theme. It is true that Mrs.



Wharton has made the shadows of the Mountain funeral quite terrible, and has brought lawyer Royall to the fore as a welcome relief to an unremitting strain. This kind of skill, however, is the only real gift that Summer illustrates. It is not a repellent story, but is essentially an empty one, and suggests too often the failings of a person who is capable of going slumming among souls.

July 14, 1917.

THE GENTEEL TRADITION

FEW things in America are so disreputable as the I. W. W. To have Mr. Churchill, the most reputable of national novelists, plunge into the thick of their polluted stream amounts to an intellectual challenge. Has it been unfair to consider Mr. Churchill definitely fixable by the aid of that brilliant diagnosis of Mr. George Santayana, The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy? Or has it been unfair to regard the I. W. W. as lacking in claims on gentility? On the surface, the collocation of Winston Churchill and the I. W. W. upsets one's previous notion of both institutions. It demands investigation, asking either for a new understanding of the labor radicals or a closer definition of the novelist's possibilities.

Grim industrialism in the throes of an I. W. W. strike is surely a theme uncongenial to Mr. Churchill, and, if the supercilious view of him were correct, he would no more attempt to tackle such a subject than Mr. Theodore Dreiser would write a Methodist novel. But where the supercilious fail in their estimate of Mr. Churchill is in supposing that he represents a dead tradition. He is not, it is true, Dionysiac. His is the cautious progressivism of a public trustee. But the singular fact about him, the main element in his success, is the tenacity of his Americanistic vitality. Traditions are viscous and

The Dwelling-Place of Light, by Winston Churchill. Macmillan, New York.

their flexibility is hard to credit, but every novel that Mr. Churchill writes shows his skill at adaptation, his power of accommodating himself and his tradition to new and awkward facts. And it is not merely that he accommodates himself. By virtue of his conscientious nature, he chews hard, he swallows, he assimilates. It is not that his temperament prompts him to seek novelty. He is not adventurous. It is simply that he heroically accepts the fare set before his country and his tradition and invariably manages to survive.

The fare, in this instance, is the Lawrence strike. How can fiction assimilate this strike so that it can give an understandable story to the children of the genteel tradition? There is something big and generous about Mr. Churchill's undertaking such a task. His absence of humor is, of course, a sure sign of his fixity in the tradition out of which, and for which, he is interpreting the new America, but even though he is solemn and responsible in regard to his audience he does not flinch under the stiff requirements of his theme. He starts, quite naturally, with an American rather than an immigrant family, but it is a family that in spite of branching New England ancestry has sunk to ignoble immigrant level and is barely able to keep its chin above water. The head of the house is an amiable incompetent man of fifty-five, Edward Bumpus, who is gate-keeper of the huge Chippering Mill. Finding refuge from reality in genealogical retrospections of the Bumpus family, he does nothing to ameliorate the lives of his driven wife and his two wage-earning daughters. One of these, Lise, is dedicated by Mr. Churchill to the Juggernaut of the imprudent. She is pleasure-lov-

ing and vulgar and slangy and cheap. She wants a "good time" and takes it, and is seduced and becomes a prostitute. Mr. Churchill is sorry for her but the symmetry of his novel demands a weak sister. It is the other girl, Janet Bumpus, whose personality is his real concern and whose fate is the gist of his story. It is through her, recognizably a high-spirited and well bred American girl whose lot is cast with the proletaire, that Mr. Churchill strives to realize a condition which is still rather ungrateful to good Americans.

"Where is the way to the dwelling-place of light?" That is the question asked by Janet's very nature. The great mill town gives her no answer. Its voice is the sharp siren in the gray morning, whipping the sleeper with scorpions. Out of the crowded streets, the miserable tenements, the myriad polyglot operatives, Janet gets no response to her own submerged desires. She is not aware of a class struggle. She has no social consciousness. She is just a valuable human being, according to any conventional reckoning of value, who is compelled to fight for herself in a hideous industrial milieu. What chance is there, provided she is incapable of baseness, of hardness, of acquiescence? Where, for a fine American girl working as stenographer on low wages in a mill town, "where is the way to the dwelling-place of light?"

The agent of the great mill in which Janet works is a red-blood New England business man named Claude Ditmar.

At five and forty he was a vital, dominating, dust-colored man, six feet and half an inch in height, weighing a hun-

dred and ninety pounds, and thus a trifle fleshy. When relaxed, and in congenial company, he looked rather boyish, an aspect characteristic of many American business men of to-day.

In this man's office Janet Bumpus (a dreadful name) goes to work. Something about her attracts him. Intent and preoccupied as he is, one brief encounter outside the office decides his interest. She is made his private stenographer; and then, as Mr. Churchill observes,

Our stage is set. A young woman, conscious of ability, owes her promotion primarily to certain dynamic feminine qualities with which she is endowed. And though she may make an elaborate pretense of ignoring the fact, in her heart she knows and resents it, while at the same time, paradoxically, she gets a thrill from it — a sustaining and inspiring thrill of power! On its face it is a business arrangement; secretly — attempt to repudiate this as one may — it is tinged with the colors of high adventure.

The possessive Mr. Ditmar finds Janet inflexibly independent. The business of the mill begins to fascinate her, and his power to impress her, but his unimaginative greed for her makes surrender impossible. Her spirited denial of him has, however, the effect of completing his love for her. She wishes to withstand this love, but before she completely comprehends her own motives she yields to him, only to become convinced immediately after, by the simultaneous "ruin" of her sister and outbreak of the strike, that she has been sacrificed to a capitalist-exploiter's greed. The violence of her rebound, under the circumstances, lands her into the ranks of the I. W. W.; stenographer to a red-lipped agitator

who proves quite as possessive as the man against whom she takes up arms.

Considering the route by which Mr. Churchill arrives at the I. W. W., a certain frightened gentility might reasonably be looked for. The one character he sees interiorly, Janet, comes to the I. W. W. on the basis of a private grievance, without any pronounced conviction beforehand as to the wrongness of the employers' attitude and without any convincing proof when she gives up Ditmar that her own plight is the same as her sister's. Though he insists that he wants to marry her, she regards herself as outraged. Her pregnancy drives her mad. She even wants to kill him. And the chaos of her feelings is telescoped with her radicalism, mere reaction as it is. But the I. W. W. leaders with whom she associates are seriously reported. Mr. Churchill copes with them in the sense that he models them on actual leaders, and represents their movement as comprehensible and definable —" a decrepit social system in a moment of lowered vitality becomes an easy prey to certain diseases which respectable communities are not supposed to have." " Loose morals and loose ties! "— Mr. Churchill is not intimidated by these symbols of syndicalism. Even the prattle of his red-lipped agitator is not a perversion. The fundamental limitation is the focussing of the crisis through Janet, an unconvinced American who is I. W. W. by misfortune, not by " fault."

The end of the book sends one back to Mr. Santayana's diagnosis.

> America [he said] is not simply a young country with an old mentality: it is a country with two mentalities, one a survival of the beliefs and standards of the fathers, the other

an expression of the instincts, practice, and discoveries of the younger generations. In all the higher things of the mind — in religion, in literature, in the moral emotions — it is the hereditary spirit that still prevails, so much so that Mr. Bernard Shaw finds that America is a hundred years behind the times. The truth is that one-half of the American mind, that not occupied intensely in practical affairs, has remained, I will not say high-and-dry, but slightly becalmed; it has floated gently in the back water, while, alongside, in invention and industry and social organization, the other half of the mind was leaping down a sort of Niagara Rapids. This division may be found symbolized in American architecture: a neat reproduction of the colonial mansion — with some modern comforts introduced surreptitiously — stands beside the sky-scraper. The American Will inhabits the sky-scraper; the American Intellect inherits the colonial mansion. The one is the sphere of the American man; the other, at least predominantly, of the American woman. The one is all aggressive enterprise; the other is all genteel tradition.

It is to the genteel tradition, at any rate, that Janet escapes. Mr. Churchill intimates that she is broken by her tragic experiences, and out of his goodwill he commiserates those experiences. But it is to the genteel tradition that she flies. In it she finds herself and is at home.

If The Dwelling-Place of Light were insincere, this adherence to tradition would destroy its substantiality. As it is, faithful though it is to the antiquated, the largeness of the considerations that it attempts to master gives it an eminence of its own. At times unspeakably clumsy, seldom or never comedic, it has the strength that always goes with straightforwardness, and it is too often mellow and tender in spirit not to be deemed fine as well as large.

Mr. Churchill will never escape from gentility. He has achieved his position as its favorite interpreter. But the vitality shown in The Dwelling-Place of Light proves how persistent is his faith in its tenets. He can make a place for the I. W. W. in his tradition rather than give up an American mill or an American girl.

October 13, 1917.

A NEW NOVELIST

WINDY McPHERSON has a Scottish sound. It suggests a revival of those quaint Hoot Man novels that once enabled Ian MacLaren and J. M. Barrie and the author of The Lilac Sunbonnet to make hay. To pump up enthusiasm for such a novel at this date would be perverse rather than heroic, and the honest reader might well shrink from being asked to admire another variation in plaid styles. But there is no need for aversion in this instance. It is only Mr. Sherwood Anderson's title that implies gnarled dialect and thorn-tree humor. Windy McPherson's Son has nothing whatever to do with the bonnie blue bell or the bonnie brier bush, it was not written out of love for the bonnie bonnie banks of Loch Lomond, or the still more bonnie bonnie Bank of Scotland.

A Chicago man born in a small middle-western town, Mr. Anderson has written a novel of the life he himself knows. He begins with Caxton, Iowa. Sam McPherson, the son of that "Windy" who indulged in G. A. R. bally-hoo, is the newsboy of his little town on the railway line between Omaha and Chicago. Sam is reticent and keen and efficient in inverse ratio to the drunkenness and wind and waste of his father. After his mother's death the boy makes Chicago. In the commission business on South Water Street he founds his fortune. He steps

Windy McPherson's Son, by Sherwood Anderson. John Lane, New York.



up into the management of an arms corporation, gets to the top, marries the daughter of the president, and faces life on a spiritual plane where keenness and efficiency alone are not enough. After a few years of life on the terms that his wife predicates, McPherson sees a chance to have himself count in a consolidation that will require him to eliminate his wife's bombastic father if he is to go through. He does go through and his wife leaves him. The rest of the story is fabulous success followed by degeneration, then by a revolutionary attempt to reach happiness and significance, and finally by an acceptance of a common lot.

One hardly needs to be told that this is the work of a new novelist. Although it embodies a wisdom of experience not often traceable in a beginner's fiction, it has a freshness that belongs to the springtime of creation. It is not merely a novel of personal fortunes. It is a novel of the meaning of life. Where a more practiced novelist might have been content to tell a story, Mr. Anderson has sought to give expression to those long thoughts which so enamor the young novelist, which so often break in the weaving like a gossamer too thin to be spun. In his failure as well as in his success Mr. Anderson has gone far beyond most of his contemporaries. Where he has failed, that is to say, he has proved a larger genuineness than most of his contemporaries prove by their success. This failure is not, of course, a warranty that Mr. Anderson is now a Great Novelist, and so on. But it is part of that bravery of the spirit without which no novel can be incorporated by its reader.

If Windy McPherson's Son is not successfully

genuine all through, it is perhaps because of Mr. Anderson's zealousness to project all of a destiny. Knowing quite thoroughly the man who is out to win, self-made, combative, daring, shrewd, self-reliant, strong, Mr. Anderson appears to have wanted to give him his climax at any cost, for the sake of the downfall afterward. With that in mind, Mr. Anderson was satisfied to represent rather thinly and poorly the relations between Sue Rainey and Sam McPherson. Sue Rainey is excellently described in the exacerbation of her first tragic pregnancy, and its effect on her husband's ideal of her is well imagined. But what one most wants, Sue's version of herself in her relation to this mailed warrior, is not completely realized. Of course, we have at the start the formula of their relations. She says:

"I am wealthy. You are able and you have a kind of undying energy in you. I want to give both my wealth and your ability to children — our children. That will not be easy for you. It means giving up your dreams of power. Perhaps I shall lose courage. Women do after two or three have come. You will have to furnish that. You will have to make a mother of me and keep making a mother of me. You will have to be a new kind of father with something maternal in you. You will have to be patient and studious and kind. You will have to think of these things at night instead of thinking of your own advancement. You will have to live wholly for me because I am to be their mother, giving me your strength and courage and your good sane outlook on things. And then when they come you will have to give all these things to them day after day in a thousand little ways."

Waiving the question of Sam's ability to give his ability to his children, there is much difficulty about

believing that any Sue could say this to any Sam. Granted that it is an accurate formula, that it expresses what every woman is supposed to feel, it reads much more like an author's reasoned memorandum than like a girl's actual announcement.

This speech is a fair example of a common kind of novelistic speech that does not seem to have the texture of life. Even if the critic is wrong in thinking that a woman seldom has so conscious a programme for the selection and direction of her confederate in the solemn responsibilities of procreation, there is still the question whether she would disclose her purpose, or purposes, to the person she is about to nominate. In these matters human beings vary monstrously, but they are more than likely to proceed by indirection, especially in bourgeois Chicago in the early stages of a love affair between a boy from Iowa and a girl in the fashionable society of 1890 or thereabouts. And if the reader has at all the conviction that indirectness is the human process in these matters of sensibility and amenity, he gets less than nothing of personal character and temperament and intonation from a novelist who hurries his plot by putting in such a quickener. There is no special point in the directness of such speeches. Mr. Anderson proffers them as if they had the pure accent of ordinary mankind. But if a woman could say a thing like this to her lover, from herself and not out of a book, she would be entitled to a novel all by her lonesome — or entitled to another Man and Superman. The attentive ear does not often record these utterances; and between them and the utterances to which a novelist like Arnold Bennett gives sanction there is a difference not merely of attention. There is that

infinitesimal yet marvelous difference that lifts the inorganic to the organic. To be said to live, a fictional personality must not only come from a generative artist, it must be integrated out of the materials of a world actually possessed. And where there is any failure of knowing and caring, as here suggested, there is only a bluff at creation. It is a bluff, curiously enough, which Americans rather despise Englishmen and Frenchmen and Russians for taking such enormous pains to avoid, pains that are against all the philosophy of being in business for profit. Living in a day of business enterprise when real rewards may be gained by goods that are just made to market, Americans see no great reason for severe integrity in the art of fiction. And yet without such integrity, the kind that makes the Five Towns true to the experience of two continents, there is no more vitality in a novel than there was in those deceptive blue birds described by Maeterlinck.

The point about Windy McPherson's Son, however, is its liberal suggestion of a new integrity in the American novel. Eloquent as the characters are in Caxton — the verbal dandy, the mad Irishman, the schoolteacher nipped by scandal, the revivalist, the woman burdened by a veteran yearning over a thousand battles never fought — they are only part of the suggestive wealth of the story. Symbolic as Sam's wanderings are, and meagre and personal as his Research is, there is a continual flood of humanity, American humanity, through sincere and exciting pages. And for all the traces of the beginner's art, there is the virtue of unexpectedness in the story, the supreme quality of the organism which a story should have.

The final impression of Windy McPherson's Son is one of poetic power. Although Mr. Anderson has a clean veracity about sex his version of the relations between men and women is rather cramped. He records the estrangement between the sexes with some bitterness. But his novel as a whole has less bitterness than one might expect from a man who has become a novelist in the artistic orphanage of the industrial Middle West. To have refused all fostering from the English and French masters, to have seen Iowa and Chicago for himself, exhibits in high degree that courage in isolation which is the heavy price of breaking new ground. That price Mr. Anderson has paid. In his succinct and quick-moving novel he has made the America of the small town his own, its stridencies and heart-hungers and thin spiral fires. He has traced the small town's tribute to Chicago and other confluences of native hope and greed and desire. The modern business enterprise that is, from the spiritual side, so often warfare without a programme or a principle, Mr. Anderson has not accepted conventionally. If there is a sign of conventionality, it is more in the attempts McPherson later makes to join in a social movement that will give meaning to his life.

Mr. Sherwood Anderson's name is likely to become familiar to readers of American fiction. Out of the slag-heap, as the romancers see it, he has extracted a veracious novel. He has shown how the will-to-power works in the American, how American enterprise can satiate its Hindenburgs and Kitcheners and greater war-lords of civil life. He has also shown the limitations of this will-to-power, as the romancer must refrain from showing it. By such



verity and by the breath of the spirit that flows through it Windy McPherson's Son is romantic, as all life is romantic, even the one-eyed Cyclopean life of monied success.

January 20, 1917.



TO AMERICAN WORKINGMEN

IT is Mr. Sherwood Anderson's distinction in Marching Men that he summons the rawest American people, brutal in their callous acceptance of their own ugly and shoddy material condition, flaccid in their personal tastes and futile in their spurts to escape from banality, barbarous in their solemnity about trivial things and their levity about serious ones, cruel in their enforcement of submissiveness and their drunken explosions against it, anarchic in their relation to any sustained purpose outside the immediacies of their food and shelter, their women and their progeny.

Having possessed himself of the vast part of the life of the vast proportion of the American people, Mr. Anderson wanted to do something besides represent its disorder and brutality and ineffectiveness. He wanted to show how it could be led. It is the failure of his book, as I see it, that he has made his hero a primordial figure about whom he is clearly infatuated. The sensational and spectacular scheme by which this Pennsylvania miner aspires to evoke the solidarity of labor hardly succeeds in escaping the ludicrous. But Marching Men is not a literal novel. It has, indeed, its large element of the caveman piffle that played such a part in the romanticizations of Jack London, but outside this puerility, this daydream of the male egoist, there is a great deal of in-

Marching Men, by Sherwood Anderson. John Lane, New York.



spiring symbolism in Marching Men, and it is justifiably dedicated to American workingmen. Perhaps, as the success of Jack London intimates, it is necessary in the novel of the proletarian to reproduce for modern hero-worship the simple Herculean giant who invariably downs his enemy. It is not the prowess of McGregor that makes Marching Men a living presence, however, so much as the freshness of feeling about workingmen and women, the vividly frank and abrupt opinions, the flashes of energetic description, the perverse notions concerning women, the details of mining town and apple-warehouse and night restaurant and Chicago pulchritude, the reminiscence of 1893 and of First Ward infamies, the swiftness of incident. Mr. Anderson's subjects are handled with a verve so different from the tired matrimonialism of the professional novelist that an occasional naïveté is unimportant. Without naïveté he would probably not have had the courage to write so graphic a proletarian novel.

"Huge, graceless of body, indolent of mind, untrained, uneducated, hating the world," McGregor is the young American whom time converts from a savage disgust with workingmen to a leadership that is ruthless love of order.

"I hate you because you are disorganized and weak like cattle. I would like to come among you teaching the power of force. I would like to slay you one by one, not with weapons but with my naked fists. If they have made you work like rats buried in a hole they are right. It is man's right to do what he can. Get up and fight."

This is the spirit that dominates McGregor when he is the joke of Coal Creek, "Beaut" McGregor,

son of "Cracked" McGregor. But besides the quest of power that occupies his first years in Chicago, an ambition that regulates his sympathies and his passions, there is a self-identification with the working class by which his hatred is merely the obverse of his love. His success as a lawyer gives him a chance to leave his class, but his sense of solidarity prevails, and the rest of his struggle is a struggle to make an army out of labor by progress from the mere rhythm of marching to a rhythm of like-mindedness in society.

There are hints of the Peter of War and Peace in the figure of Mr. Anderson's McGregor, but it is only necessary to mention a Tolstoyan hero to mark the rudimentary portraiture of the American. He is not, primarily, an independent will. He is a purposeful creation of the author. We are introduced inside him, but only to discover that he is all of a piece, as simple as a sun-dial, and the mechanism by which he works requires a light from outside. His treatment in Coal Creek does supply some real motivation, and there are symptoms of spontaneous human nature in his relations with the undertaker's daughter, the milliner, the fashionable Chicagoan. But there is something about his devotion to a love of order, his recurrence to his simple sententiousness, that suggests a cuckoo-clock. The only way to overcome the difficulty of establishing an idea in a novel is to humanize every expression of its sponsor. This is not Mr. Anderson's way. His McGregor uniformly knocks men down, uniformly hates, uniformly suppresses women, uniformly spouts. He is fervid but rigid, a romancer's man.

The chief fact about Marching Men is not, how-

ever, its rhetoric, its grandiloquence. It is its apprehension of the great fictional theme of our generation, industrial America. Because the subject is barbarous, anarchic and brutal it is not easy for its story to be told. But the restless vitality of the thing itself is beginning to be felt, through layers of professorial censorship. Harsh voices, wild tongues of fire, ominous multitudinous mutterings, are at last striving up our horizon.

One is induced in reading Marching Men to theorize on the enormous gap between literate and unliterate America. The novel's weakness in throwing a rainbow across the gulf is a sign of the sundered realities. The explanation lies, perhaps, in man's faculty for ignoring the obvious, his great gift for evading glaring fact. It is not obtuseness that makes the chauffeur ignore hitching-posts or makes the admirer of Elihu Root fail to see the importance of Bill Haywood. It is a difference of purpose. It seems to be the necessity and the penalty of jealous purpose to compel the evasion of glaring fact, to delete unacceptable fact from consideration. The youth who lives in a boarding-house can walk his city for ever without seeing carpenters' shops or plumbers', groceries or meats, and his blindness is not that he cannot see these agencies of life but that he has no sufficient motive for seeing. We cannot observe, apparently, unless we expand our purposes to make a place for attendant fact. If fact is stubborn and we are not ready for it, there is every category of morals and taste to be enlisted to side-track it. The imagination is much more connected with will, much more the servant of habit and circumstance, than we are accustomed to admit. The first step in edu-

cating the imagination, indeed, is to remind ourselves that the shutter remains on the camera so long as we do not will to perceive.

By reason of these restrictions, it seems to me, the proletarian has had small place in American fiction. Under the ban of negligible ugliness, as the eminent novelists see it, comes the great majority of the people. They, the eminent ones, have principally been the children of circumspect parents, Presbyterians or Baptists, middle class in social and moral habits and unlikely to be hospitable to the primordial. Outside their view lies the life of the proletarian except as it impinges on the middle class, and these rawnesses of American existence, so conceived, have as little part in a polite literacy as have peanuts in the poetry of Oscar Wilde. It is not that the facts are seen and rejected. The facts are simply not open to the eminent novelists any more than to social-sentiment workers or bright reporters or class-hyphenates of the sweetest disposition. The proletarians are in a different universe of discourse, and one so unthinkable to eminent novelists that is promptly ruled out, the way we humane people rule out the superheated hell.

Where Marching Men succeeds is in thrusting the greater American realities before us, seen as by a workingman himself. It is a fragmentary novel, rhetorical in the atmosphere that surrounds McGregor and uncritical of its own notion of solidarity, but a narrative that suggests the presence in our fiction of a man who knows our largest theme.

September 29, 1917.





NOVELS AND NOVELISTS, 2





GEORGE MEREDITH

THERE is not the slightest chance that the last of George Meredith's writings will be popular. As it stands, a block from which the figures have scarcely begun to emerge, Celt and Saxon is not even certain to attract loyal Meredithians. To unfinished novels most of us are honestly averse, and this one is definitely unfinished. Yet it would be dull not to ask for it the greatest possible prominence. It is characteristic and worthy of Meredith; it deserves the consideration of every one who knows what "Meredith" means.

The unfinished novel is discouraging because it loses the virtue of plot, but this is a minor loss in the case of the most engaging of psychologists. As a maker of plots Meredith was a limping hero. It is notorious that he was deficient in the craft of story-telling, and Celt and Saxon will cause no one to appeal this verdict.

If Meredith's mind were not of such startling and delightful quality, it would be affectation to recommend Celt and Saxon. There is no use pretending that his limitations as a story-teller were not serious. They are one of the causes of an unpopularity which is never likely to be overcome. A plot, after all, is a design to which everything else must be subordinated if the reader's attention is to be enticed and enthralled. Rude life may not conform to this de-

Celt and Saxon, by George Meredith. Scribners, New York.



sign, and the psychologist may despise it, yet there is no such thing as a good novel that has not a good plot. The difficulty in Meredith seems to be a difficulty of sheer intellectual exuberance. Time after time he starts honestly spinning his yarn, but as he warms to his task he becomes intoxicated by his own cerebration, and as he yields to his passion for vital comment on life his plot goes hang. If events march forward in his stories, they also halt for hours at a time, to suit the author's convenience. For the distracted reader he has no bowels of mercy. Like many brilliant men, he will be enjoyed on his own terms or not at all.

In the patriotic Irish view, Celt and Saxon is not entirely satisfactory. To a man who loved England as Meredith loved it there was something grotesque in the extremist Irish view. To him the differences between England and Ireland were differences not as to union itself, but as to the terms of union. He could not, as a man of common sense, conceive the passionate individualism of Ireland, its passionate desire to be divorced from the empire, to be "a nation once again." In a beautiful woman Meredith would have understood this shrugging harness: he would have been the first to unbuckle the harness and give the creature her way. But for a feeble people, beaten in the international fight for survival, he had no such radical sympathy. He wrote, in short, not as a Celt, but as a Celt-and-Saxon. He wrote in the great faith of Imperialism, his conning tower planted at Boxhill. For this reason his political rendering of the Irish situation is not to the taste of the Irish. Meredith did not know the Beauchamps of modern Ireland, and his igno-

rance is astonishingly Saxon. But the patriotic Irish make a great mistake if they decry this book on political grounds. It is, after all, for its insight into the spiritual constitution of the Irish that it is valuable. And here, as always, Meredith is supreme.

It is characteristic that the Irish gentlemen of this novel should be unrealistically conceived. His Patrick O'Donnell is an Irish gentleman educated by the Jesuits in France, and he talks like no Irishman that ever breathed. He talks like Meredith! And yet, under this curious lingo of Meredith masquerading in a brogue, the spirit of an Irishman is flaming. The same applies to Con and Philip. In each case the lamp is Meredithian, but the fire is Irish. It is precisely as if the novelist were an actor unable to mimic but able to convey and inspire the emotion.

To John Bull the Irishman is a mercurial creature, as unstable as he is impressionable. It is balsam to an Irishman to find that Meredith understands this temperament, and does not judge it with Marcus Aurelius for text. To Marcus Aurelius the highest English ideal conforms — the ideal that Meredith himself maintained in Redworth and the protagonist of Sir Willoughby. But Meredith was not so stoic as to admire only those Irishmen who approximate Englishmen. He conceived, as few English do, the difference between character and stolidity. He conceived the difference between admirable self-possession and English imperturbable self-will. Knowing the Irish chameleon as well as the British bull, he was yet quick to recognize in the finer Celt a quality of imagination and prehension in which the Saxon is lacking. The charm of this quality Meredith not only observes: he represents it. His Patrick O'Don-

nell incarnates this social genius. He has the wit, the tenderness, the naïveté and the cajolery which make an Irishman as different from an Englishman as water is different from earth. And one is allured by Meredith's double reflection of his characters — his mirror of Ireland in the English mind and of England in the Irish. In his chapter on John Bull, on that grunter and guzzler whom he so loathed, there is sharp criticism of his own people to balance his satire of the bamboozling Captain Con. This chapter and a similar one on journalism have his true magnetic touch.

Celt and Saxon has some delicious phrases. "He was tall, and had clear Greek outlines: the lips were locked metal, thin as edges of steel." In the house of this frigid gentleman, there was among the heirlooms "a shirt of coarse linen with a pale brown spot on the breast, like a fallen beech leaf." To Wells, I am afraid, that would have been something sharp and journalistic — an A. B. C. shop tea stain. "Bull's perusal of the Horatian 'carpe diem' is acute as that of the cattle in fat meads." And what of John Bull's attitude toward Meredith himself, the "simple starveling piper"? It is Bull,

> your all for animal pleasure in the holiday he devours and cannot enjoy, whose example teaches you to shun the plaguey tale that carries fright; and so you find him sour at business and sick of his relaxings, hating both because he harnesses himself in turn bestially to each, growling at the smallest admixture of them, when, if he would but chirp a little over his work, and allow his pleasures to inspire a dose of thoughtfulness, he would be happier, and — who knows — become a brighter fellow, one to be rescued from the pole-ax.



Having quoted such typical phrases as these, it seems strange to admit the unpopularity of Meredith. And yet he is admired and loved by but a few. With gifts prodigious and an excess of that rare genius called temperament, he is thrown away by most readers as a nut not worth cracking. His writing is felt to be strained and unnatural, and by some table thumpers is denounced as effeminate. He cannot be called degenerate, because the prankt flowers he displays are not poisonous, yet had Meredith discussed the blacker arts of life he would undoubtedly be known as a degenerate writer, a decadent. As it is, people who do not look inward do not like him. And even his admirers are sometimes at a loss to explain why, in spite of his patent limitations, they discern in him one of the few great spirits, a spirit in whose light the petty dwindles and the shameful shrinks away, one whose art was but the faulty medium of a soul that itself had triumphed in exceeding trial, and came out a sharp comedian, one who staunchly accepted his burden, knowing it would always be as light as the heart that bore it.

It was not by virtue of animal spirits that Meredith was a comedian. His is comedy of the intellect, the only comedy possible to a creature so sensitized. Men are born either with red blood in their veins or blue blood. They are born either with the flesh and genial emotions predominating or the spirit and brains predominating. To my mind Meredith was essentially blue-blooded, but he was too great a man, too much of a genius to become a type. Genius miraculously transfuses the bloods genial and critical. It embraces the world, and understands all things. In Meredith there was no urging of an

aristocratic code. He was as truly a natural man as the reddest teamster. But in him so many elements were raging, there was so much "wind and fire," there was such complexity of nerve and sympathy and egoism and morality and passion, that it took a million-handed style to perform the perfectly honest and representative expression that he desired. Where many ideas are candidates for expression, there will sometimes be an uproar which no chairman can dominate. Meredith's brain was so fertile that its activity was almost inflammatory, and he did not always observe parliamentary rules. As a result his novels are dazzlingly intellectual, but likely to addle our brains unless we learn his method. That he had a method, that he understood life and art deeply, that he included within himself ten thousand men and women, seems to me invincibly true. Celt and Saxon itself shows an understanding of character not to be paralleled in the writings of Englishmen or Irishmen. Read Trollope's mutton-headed writings about the Irish and compare them with this. See what Lever wrote with a pen dipped in Irish whisky, and contrast it with Meredith's reading of the Celt, a reading that sees in rollicking Con something more than human vaudeville. Vaudeville there is in Meredith's Con, but a vaudeville in which all of us sits in audience, not a vaudeville in which your common sense has been deposited in the cloakroom and your sense of decency been thrust under the seat. It is because Meredith never bromides his brain that so many people resent him — they whose brains are still in the condition of winter pears. And in resenting his brilliance they foolishly deny him depth and fundamental feeling.

Perhaps the greatest reason why Meredith cannot be popular is deficiency in commonplace. This is at once his supreme virtue and his most serious defect. There is nothing commonplace about him, neither his way of saying things, nor the things he says, nor the people he conceives, nor the surroundings he conceives them in. He abhors the literal, he ignores it. His whole manner of regarding commonplace fact is oblique. He can reveal the life effect of a moment's shiftiness in one lightning phrase, yet he will write about an aristocrat's leg in language so symbolic and circumlocutory that you pine to own the leg yourself, with a boot on it. Meredith writes about commonplace people as he might write about cows and sheep. To him they are a race apart, interesting no doubt and reasoning as well as instinctive (so professors say) but not of his ilk. The novelist was, of course, a democrat. But he did not love the masses the way Whitman loved them. He could not have flung open his spiritual house and let the crowds trample through him, after the fashion of Balzac and Tolstoy. He could not have vulgarized himself for the sake of those very people whom he beheld as the object of all government and civilizing. Inclusive in his philosophy and inclusive in his understanding, he was exclusive in his wit and in his taste. His mind, indeed, was peopled with a nobility infinitely better bred and accomplished than any that exists in England. His sublimation of Queen Victoria was typical — he had to sublimate, and the best media for his uncommonplace conception of life were the ladies and gentlemen of old England. Such ladies and gentlemen! Had a man of less genius tried to sublimate them he would have



been culpably sentimental and snobbish. Meredith was neither — his brain happened to be a eugenic brain, that is all, and the creatures that emanated therefrom were eugenically delivered.

The absence of commonplace in Meredith is not wholly a virtue. No novelist can hope to reach many people who does not include and dwell upon the familiar affairs of men, the common drudgeries as well as the high emotions. In Meredith we live with our superiors, people in whom there is dross, but not our dross, people whose mental and spiritual pace is swift, and whose motives are rarefied. Such people exist, worthy of such a master. But to live with one's superiors is trying — no wonder people shrink from Meredith's galaxy. The mere splendor of such life repels one, as one would be repelled by ten hours of continuous Beethoven. Our nerves wince at such strumming, exquisite though it be. We long for rye bread and beer and the reassurance of dull companions. We long for earth under our feet, after soaring. We want leave to relax and even dissipate. Meredith expects too much of us — and of himself. His will is ever-present. Never pathological, he is still incessantly introspective and critical. He has little in common with happy romantics like Barrie, who has the heart of a child. Meredith is least of all simple and sensational. If he climbs physical Alps it is a spiritual excitement and adventure. Skeptical in all matters of religion, he employs his intellect on everything, and retains sanity only because it is so stupid to be insane.

In all of the novels one is struck again and again by the purity of Meredith's interests, his extraordinary sublimation in a world that so shrinks from the

sublime. But however difficult it may be to breathe in these altitudes of Meredith, however difficult to fraternize with his women and men, however hard to accept his recondite wit, let us at least not be so stupid as to assume that his sublimation has in it any fear of life. Meredith holds himself superior to nothing natural, but he makes strict terms with life, and he keeps his side of the bargain. Aware of the thousand disguises in which we entertain the bestial man, he detects him and keeps him in control. That is a great part of his secret, of his magnificent hardness, of his keenness and his intellectual zest.

September 9, 1910.

HENRY JAMES

VERY slight has been the notice bestowed, up to the present, on Mr. Henry James's new stories. They are accepted by the reviewers just as "more James," without much reference to what the "James" part of the statement stands for. A newer talent of equal piquancy might arouse more excitement. But this particular talent, just because it is guaranteed, is slighted even as might be slighted the unassertive devotion of a valuable friend. Mr. James does not startle, as inspired genius startles. He merely goes on being his peculiar and immensely clever self; and for the savoring of this self few reviewers seem to have kept keen.

Why so few people were, in the first place, keen about Mr. James is too easy to see. A younger novelist, but one of more powerful literary character, came out the other day with a downright and crushing summary of the obvious limitations of Mr. James. "He is tremendously lacking in emotional power." That was the first item, slapped down with a journalistic "tremendous." "Also his sense of beauty is over sophisticated and wants originality. Also his attitude toward the spectacle of life is at bottom conventional, timid and undecided. Also he seldom chooses themes of first-class importance, and when he does choose such a theme he never fairly bites it and makes it bleed. Also his curiosity is

The Finer Grain, by Henry James. Scribners, New York.



limited." It is because many, many readers besides Mr. Arnold Bennett feel exactly these deficiencies that the event of Mr. James is, to most eyes, no more stimulating than a chill and watery dawn.

One admits that for every item in this emphatic dictum by Mr. Bennett there is, from the standpoint of Mr. Bennett's personal requirements in fiction, a sufficient warrant. Tested on The Finer Grain, every one of these judgments is found to be valid, entirely valid. Emotionally Mr. James is feeble. He is, in a certain sense, inadequate. That is, he fails to get from life the generous, unpremeditated thrill, which is the splendor of life — or if he gets it, he does not yield to it, he does not magnanimously and whole-heartedly communicate it. Here Mr. James is distinguished even from the run of authors, in his unwillingness to let his emotions carry him to sea, in his intense and jealous containment of self. He is incapable either of relishing or of practicing that precise kind of personal mauling which Arnold Bennett here illustrates. In Mr. James there are many traits of the sedate, the urbane, the playful, the fastidious, the secretive, the luxurious, the epicurean — many traits, in fine, of the cat. It is a cat equally without civic pride and republican spirit and without the anarchist's divine discontent. It is, as it were, a detached bachelor if not a celibate cat. It is a cat occupied with cream, with cushions, with dry and pretty peregrinations, with the art of pleasing, and the art of being pleased. It is a superior animal, choice in its friendships, appreciative but undemonstrative, and preserving always the demeanor of spiritual chastity.

Such an animal is of necessity "conventional,

timid and undecided." By a series of exquisite maneuvres, of gentle, deft unravelings, of patient persistences, it may reach the heart of a mystery, and satisfy a curiosity which, if limited, is sleepless. That, in the end, is the nature of the creature. To ask of such a creature the canine virtues is to ask that a diplomat proceed as an army with banners. It is legitimate expression of preference, but it is not criticism.

It is possible, of course, for cats to be disappointing qua cats. But what Mr. Bennett sets on the debit side of Mr. James seems to me to be the very essential qualities of Mr. James. He is blaming the cat for being a cat. He is saying: "Observe that animal. He does not bark. He does not leap on you, friendly and vociferous. He does not wag his tail. He does not bite. He does not attack the burglar. He is lamentably timid. As I live, it is a strange dog! I swear I do not see why he wears a blue ribbon."

Criticising Mr. James as he does, it is evident that Mr. Bennett is not predisposed, in any event, to the feline. But not every one is so limited. And granting that Mr. James is feline, it remains also to be said that he is a prince among felines. He is, after all, an artist. The more of an artist he is, the more he develops his own peculiar attitude toward life. One may intensely dislike that attitude. One may regard it as pitifully circumspect and drearily personal. One may despise it for its apparent absence of poetry, of public spirit, of adventure, of heroism. But it is an honest, a sincere, a wonderfully "true" attitude. The point is, that whether one happens to like or dislike Mr. James's self,

one must marvel at the way he has asserted his right to himself. Whatever the timidity, the convention, the indecision of his "type," there is no timidity in his acceptance, his marvelous transcription of the type. No ideology has prevented Mr. James from being true to his nature. And so, if one be as oddly unedified as Mr. Bennett himself by that nature, one must still wonder at the stupidity which calls an artist moral names simply for giving life as he sees it. To blame the artist, not as he should be blamed, for failing in his art of presenting life, but for presenting a view of life that does not edify — that is the essence of British philistinism. I do not, for my part, hold that edification is not worth discussing. I do not hold that Mr. James's values should not be transvalued. But that is not the first business of literary criticism. The first business, in this case, is to ask whether Mr. James does really possess a view of life. And that he does possess such a view, of the most charming if feline integrity (and, after all, a cat has his own difficult kind of integrity), is the point one, in this particularly rude and personal way, would emphasize.

We are so used, in our fiction, to having the novelist assert that conduct is three-fourths of life that we are scarcely prepared for Mr. James's unashamed following of predilection. Mr. James's themes may not be of first-rate importance to many people, but they are, all of them, in their modest way, of importance to Mr. James. He has shown in his prefaces how many of these themes came to him, in his casual existence as a man of his quite sufficient world. Without going outside that world, clinging to its coziness, its familiarity, its practised and ever modu-

lated habit of intercourse, he yet found in it a full employment, and in order to know "life" never regarded it necessary to obey Mrs. Gertrude Atherton's injunction and spend years in a newspaper office, living "instead of dreaming and scribbling." Mr. James has dreamed and scribbled to suit his own admirable fancy. According to Mrs. Atherton he would be much improved had a ruthless city editor "pruned" his style into one "direct, incisive and compelling." But there again is the preconception of what style should be, and what the man should be.

Anglo-Saxons are given to presuming that if a man does exactly what he wants to do, it is wrong. The presumption has a great deal in it. But when it comes to judging fiction, it is much safer to presume that the real artist knows what he is about; that there is method in his madness; that in fact the only way to judge him is to stand in his shoes. This of course applies only to a person who is true to himself, who knows what he is about. It does not apply for one second to people who want style to be dictated by the ruthless city editor. Such people do not yet know what they exist for. They still imagine that style is something not to be elicited but to be prescribed.

The great trouble with Henry James, of course, is that he takes the time to indulge in his own fantasy. Men of the practical world have not time for such savoring of sensation, such apparently unremunerative living. Take for instance the aforesaid ruthless city editor. How can the city editor consult his own fancies, obey his own impulses, when he has to occupy himself with dishing up news seven times a day? The city editor is not a student of life, or an expert as to life. He is too busy to do anything except

work frantically at his job. If he knows what he likes or dislikes, if he is conscious of personal sensations, it is impossible for him to savor them. The vastly important thing is to dish up seven editions a day, or 2,100 a year, or 21,000 every ten years, as his contribution to that impressive and for the most part appalling spectacle, the Day's Work.

What is true for the city editor is true for innumerable business men, busy-ness being their business. Such men have no time for Mr. James's meticulous consultation of personal taste. In peremptory phrases they dismiss all the things that it interests Mr. James to put into long-hand, and they find their real life in making two coathangers hang where one hung before, in having two neckties worn out where one was worn out before. To judge between them is like judging between cat and dog. Personally, I like commonplaces. I prefer the artist who sees that common life, and common people, and common affections are just as precious in their possibilities as the life of the virtuoso, sophisticated, calculating and discreet. But while the very best dog may be preferable to the very best cat, I do not think of preferring the ordinary yapping and yowling cur, the demos dog, to this rare and always amusing specimen in Mr. James.

In the present volume Mr. James's essential preoccupation in the æsthetics of private relations is proved by his choice of persons. The standpoint is that of a writer in The Velvet Glove. It is that of a middle-aged painter in Nora Montravers. In A Round of Visits it is that of a middle-aged American, with a private though an imperiled income, and of a not dissimilar person in Crapy Cornelia. I do

not know whose shoes Mr. James wears in The Bench of Desolation. I did not, and certainly not perfunctorily, read the The Bench of Desolation.

To overpraise The Velvet Glove is as difficult as to suggest the social manner of a fascinating foreign stranger. But the anecdote is simple. In a crowded Paris salon, John Berridge, a prepossessing and most esteemed young author, is complimented by a dazzling young English Lord who, warmly and shyly, asks Berridge for his verdict on the book of a Friend. Presently the friend appears, a radiant complement of the Lord, who instantly singles out Berridge and envelopes him in attention. Berridge is breathless in the lady's sudden and sunny wave, and is gasping at the bountiful rollers he sees coming. The book he glances at, a fearful composition written by the young Olympian in a "lit'ry" aberration, but while he waits in the corner of the salon, never completely lost to her sight, he is suddenly flooded by her return, and borne happily but dumbly to the privacy of her motor, her escort "home." And, then, in the motor, it is broken to him! She wants an American preface to her velvet novel, The Velvet Glove. She is seducing him, who already was leaping Olympus, and imagining himself deified, the occupant of her young Lord's throne, and by ravishment. In her beaming disclosure the young goddess "dear man's" him, puts him back on his native earth, dismantles him of everything but self-possession. Berridge refuses to capitulate, refuses to give up his dream of her golden favor to the invading banality. She, in the last persuasiveness, kisses the Master's hand, the hand that is going to write her Preface. Not a little alarmed at possible prostrations, he

firmly transfers the same kiss back to her glove, and prepares to eliminate himself from the motor. But home is reached in a trice, in the language of The Velvet Glove, and on the step Berridge's effusion of the salon is in one swift twist justified, the coronal act is accomplished. It is in the invention at the end that Mr. James is so cunning.

The elaboration of Nora Montravers is the only thing in its disfavor. Mr. James extracts a good deal of humor out of the transference of the "cocky" family position from a likable man to his too straw-colored wife, a lady in a "white invalidical shawl."

Out of Mr. James's two New York stories it is possible to have a thoroughly good time. One of them ends with a suicide. But there is an absence of common emotion, of that quite undiscriminating welling of human sympathy, in Mr. James's description of violent death, which makes his climax spill red ink rather than blood. Here he does actually fail. He is, worse luck, not "direct, incisive, compelling" enough. Still meticulous when required to advance relations energetically, he pitches with all his forces, but the ball has a feminine feebleness. Mr. James is not fitted for this violence. He is too urban, too urbane. He reminds one too much of a passive, dignified, rather portly Oriental, called upon to sprint after a street car. We turn our backs and wait for the incident to close.

In speaking of his little man in Wimbledon, Mr. James refers to his imagination. "Didn't it let him into more deep holes than it pulled him out of? Didn't it make for him more tight places than it saw him through? Or didn't it at the same time, not

less, give him all to himself a life, exquisite, occult, dangerous and sacred, to which everything ministered, and which nothing could take away?" Was not Mr. James thinking of his own imagination when he said this, his "exquisite, occult, dangerous and sacred" faculty? Only the life it gives him is not kept all to himself, but beautifully shared with us — with those of us who, for want of an equally exquisite and occult faculty, repay our master by calling him a cat!

December 2, 1910.

THE WAY OF ALL FLESH

THERE are two Samuel Butlers in English letters. One of them died 220 years ago, and he gets several sticks of type in our encyclopedia. Of the other, who died in 1902, there is no mention at all. You can ascribe this lapse in the encyclopedia to the ignorance of the editors, Messrs. Gilman, Peck and Colby. But the encyclopedia comes very near being a consensus of popular knowledge. If its makers had never harkened to the more recent Samuel Butler, it is ample indication that he is still in the antechamber of fame.

How long Samuel Butler must stay in the waiting-room when Mr. Peck has put Mr. Colby in the encyclopedia, and Mr. Colby has put Mr. Peck there, is an interesting question. Perhaps the answer may be given that already men are hammering on the door and demanding that Butler be admitted. Mr. Bernard Shaw has delivered peremptory summons, and many readers have already been sent to Butler by Shaw's fine declaration that he owes much himself to that writer's "extraordinarily fresh, free and future-piercing suggestions." But Shaw is not alone in proclaiming Butler. Two years ago a British weekly ventured to assert that "all in all, he is, perhaps, the keenest, broadest and most fearless mind of our age." This effusive verdict would have made Butler smile. It is likely he would himself have preferred that other encomium by an English paper

The Way of All Flesh, by Samuel Butler. Dutton, New York.

which he often ridiculed. "It may be felt that truth had best assert itself in other ways than by revolt," said the London Times in October, 1908, "But whatever may be thought of the moral, Butler's steel-pointed wit remains a pure delight. The most stimulating quality a book can possess is the sense that behind it there is a critical intelligence which is always on the watch, piercing through and through its material, never taking things for granted, never allowing itself to be drugged by picturesque phrases or unreal sentiment. There are not so many such that Samuel Butler's high integrity, his hatred of insincerity and mystification, his fearlessness, his splendid power of satire, can be overlooked or lightly valued."

Eulogies like this are apt to scare off the honest American publisher. He knows that when a man is praised for high integrity, hatred of insincerity and sentimentalism, and satirical power, the chances of selling 5000 copies of his masterpiece are pretty slim. The Way of All Flesh, Butler's sole novel, was finished in 1844, but it did not appear till 1903. For seven years, then, the shrewd American publishers have approached Butler in the way Meredith's young person approached the gay lady—sniffing but not daring to snap. But the temptation of so much integrity, fearlessness, humor and genius has at last proved too much for E. P. Dutton and Co. They have given Butler's masterpiece an American imprint, and even if they huddled his work into type that might be called the Oculist's Friend, they deserve well of the small literary clique in America on whom sporting publishers are occasionally willing to venture a stake correspondingly small.



Had we the sesame to the door of fame, we should at once lay a long red line of what is known as strip carpet and invite Samuel Butler to pick his steps up to the beckoning entrance. But so often do critics use their sesame only to find their heroes snubbed and pooh-poohed and yawned over, that we shall be careful about recommending Samuel Butler at large. He pokes some fun himself at Impulsia Gushington, or whoever it is that reviews novels in our contemporaries under the legend: "There is no Evil." And certainly there is edge to his criticism of the weekly that once a month or so "always found some picture which was the finest that had been done since the old masters, or some satire that was the finest that had appeared since Swift or some something which was incomparably the finest that had appeared since something else." Yet it would be unfair to adopt his own cool words and say of this book that it was merely "an able one and abounded with humor, just satire, and good sense." That much is said every week of books as full of waste as Winston Churchill's. To convey the extraordinary character of The Way of All Flesh one must do more even than rally authorities like Shaw, and the Nation and the Times. One must assert one's own humble satisfaction and in no unmistakable terms.

Any one who has got this far in the present review is more than likely to understand that in Samuel Butler there is little of the conventional rococo which endears Winston Churchill, poor man, to his enormous and quite uncritical audience. But the astonishing and delightful thing about Samuel Butler is that he does not write The Way of All Flesh to satisfy the lovers of pure and plain principle and clap

them on the back. He does not seek to justify the select few to their estimable selves, at the expense of the purveyors of conventional fodder. No, indeed. Samuel Butler's sword is not only Castilian but double-edged. With one edge he undoubtedly attacks the uncritical, but with the other, and the keener, he cuts into the supercilious prig. It would be a mistake to say that his novel shows indifference to idealism. It is limited in its appeal precisely because it can interest only those who have endured introspection and the tortures of conscience and the agonies of self-criticism. But the small company that has an intellectual sense (usually a proud intellectual sense) of affinity with Hamlet need not suppose that Samuel Butler is going to do for them what the Russian novelists have done. On the contrary. the whole burden of his novel is the follies of Hamletry. If his book is merciless to the ordinary religious father and mother in England, it is equally relentless toward their mollycoddle son. But there is this difference: Samuel Butler understands the mollycoddle to the core and loves him: and he exhibits his evolution because he knows that the follies which he detects could not exist except in a soul that is to be valued.

Ernest Pontifex, Samuel Butler's hero, suffers horribly from idealism. When at last he begins to see the idiocy of trying to be absolutely perfect, it is only to discover that the huge majority of the men have never been troubled by any such idiocy, but have quite naturally adopted the Eleventh Commandment, "Thou Shalt Not Be Found Out." It stands to reason that those who have never worried morbidly about their imperfection will take a thoroughly



Rooseveltian attitude toward Ernest, call him a mollycoddle, and have done with it. The curious thing is that Butler himself seems to agree with Roosevelt. He singles out one Towneley as the graceful, lovable, well bred, "red-blooded" type — an empiric man who would generally echo John Mitchel's dictum that a certain nation of mollycoddles "would have been saved long ago if it wasn't for their damned souls." Ernest Pontifex adores Towneley and he sums up the difference between that eupeptic gentleman and his confused self in these words: "I see it all now. The people like Towneley are the only ones who know anything that is worth knowing, and like that of course I can never be. But to make Towneleys possible there must be hewers of wood and drawers of water — men, in fact, through whom conscious knowledge must pass before it can reach those who can apply it gracefully and instinctively as the Towneleys can. I am a hewer of wood, but if I accept the position frankly and do not set up to be a Towneley, it does not matter."

This attitude of Butler's is summed up in the phrase, "The result depends upon the thing done and the motive goes for nothing." But there is a difference, after all, between this scorn for fine-spun and high-flown theories that don't work out in practice and the ordinary scorn of the rationalist. Ultimately Butler is not a red-blood. Ultimately he has "confidence that it is righter and better to believe what is true than what is untrue, even though belief in the untruth may seem at first most expedient." But he is sick of the writers who do nothing except prate about idealism. He is sick of the idealistic

pimple that is priggishness. He is sick of the people, unconventional or conventional, whose ideals are heard but not seen.

The hatred of rules is no small part of Samuel Butler's nature, especially the rules of parents and schoolmasters. The only rules he regards as worth knowing are not the fixed rules of institutions, but the rules of thumb by which human beings are living. Over and over again he parallels that philosophy which says that an actress who remains chaste is a prig. "Extremes are alone logical, and they are always absurd, the mean is alone practicable and it is always illogical. . . . Sensible people will get through life by rule of thumb as they may interpret it most conveniently without asking too many questions for consciences's sake." This lesson, of course, would be wasted on the Average Man, who is seldom even aware of his illogicality. It would be wasted on the ordinary American, who would be bored even at hearing it discussed. But it will not be wasted on those who, like Samuel Butler himself, want primarily to live a life as honest as is compatible with happiness, and who are feeling like Judge Grosscup, the deplorable "need for honesty" in others. The Way of All Flesh is, in the clever phrase of H. G. Wells, a Dreadnaught. It is of about the same length as Tono-Bungay and little shorter than The Old Wives' Tale, or It Never Can Happen Again. To my mind it is a wiser book than any of these, which is saying a good deal. It has less brilliance than Tono-Bungay and less suggestiveness. It has less background and less social idiom than Bennett's great book. It is less whimsical and less ingratiating than De Morgan's. But it knows

more about the old Adam than any of the three, and can give them fifty yards in a hundred for critical intelligence. Occasionally in novels you read of a Great Writer whose work is so stupendous that the novelist doesn't dare to quote from it (unless he be as foolhardy as May Sinclair). Well, Samuel Butler would be an ideal figure for that Great Writer. In The Way of All Flesh there is not (me judice) one meretricious line. The same might be said of The Old Wives' Tale, but the difference between a successful novel of ideas and successful novel of manners is like the difference between exploding dynamite and discharging a rifle.

Butler admits you into an easy and humorous freemasonry, if you happen to be his sort. Not with a wink, but quietly and serenely. He tells you what you've always privately known, but never admitted, and he also clears up many things you thought you knew, but didn't. He is not above a certain perversity about the idealist, but he makes no easy jokes and works off nobody else's wisdom or sentiment. What he has is his own, and it is very astonishing and shrewd of its kind.

People who were born sensible may not enjoy this book. For them I cannot venture to speak. But for those who have worked hard for whatever understanding they have got, God help them, the book will be intimate, diverting and reassuring. It will not excite people who know how to be happy. But there are many people who don't know whether they are as happy as they might expect, and and there are others who, having failed to be happy by doing what they were told, have at last caught on to the fact that very few people are doing as they were told, the most

successful perhaps least of all. For such people, in whom there has been less sense than sensibility, the plot of the novel will be no less exciting than plots far easier advertised. For, while Butler only draws full-length portraits of his hero up to the infant age of 28, he sees him through the most serious and threatening vicissitudes, and though the youth "gets religion" when he is still in Cambridge and loses it in London, he has to go clean through bankruptcy, imprisonment and matrimony before he learns the first things about himself or human nature.

The plot is so alluring throughout that one might easily wonder how Butler manages to get in so much sheer comment. It is done, for the most part, by interluded essays — digressions of a page or less. Thus one may find Advice to Parents, Hints on Happiness, essays on Genius, on Clergymen's Sons, on Sex Education, on Luck, on Literary Instinct, on Speculation and the Stock Market, on Ideas, on Spiritual Wild Oats, on Truth, on Loss of Money as the greatest of all mishaps, on False Idealism, on Useless Metaphysics, on the Art of Mental Healing, on Good Intentions, and on Book Reviewers. Such passages are improved by observations like these: "The advantage of doing one's praising for oneself is that one can lay it on so thick and exactly in the right places." "The best liar is he who makes the smallest amount of lying go the longest way."

Clever males are best judged in their attitude toward women. I should prefer to leave Samuel Butler not dwelling on his extraordinary exposition of the cruelty in childhood that comes through the ignorance and stupidity of parents, nor on his serene examination of the things that can happen to one

who is "Quixotic, impulsive, altruistic, guileless." Here he is rare, but the best people in his book are Mrs. Jupp and Althea. Miss Althea Pontifex, an aunt not yet fifty when she dies, never gave her nephew a syllable of good advice, but she cared enough for him to leave him her fortune in trust till he was 28. "It is an unusually foolish will," she said. "but he is an unusually foolish boy." And perhaps the "last coherent words" she uttered to her faithful friend who tells this story of her nephew in the first person are fullest of the peculiar and precious flavor that was their author's. Let those who enjoy these words know that they do not belie the book: "She talked principally about her nephew. 'Don't scold him,' she said, 'if he is volatile and continually takes things up only to throw them down again. How can he find out his strength or weakness otherwise? A man's profession,' she said — and here she gave one of her wicked little laughs —'is not like his wife, which he must take once for all, for better, for worse, without proof beforehand. . . .

"'Above all,' she continued, 'do not let him work up to his full strength, except once or twice in his life time; nothing is well done nor worth doing unless, take it all around, it has come pretty easily. Theobald and Christina (his parents) would give him a pinch of salt and tell him to put it on the tail of the seven deadly virtues'; — here she laughed again in her old manner at once so mocking and so sweet —'I think if he likes pancakes he had perhaps better eat them on Shrove Tuesday, but this is enough.'"

June 10, 1910.

BUTLER'S NOTE-BOOKS

IN The Doctor's Dilemma there is a saucy reference to an unprofessional heretic who has views on art, science, morals and religion. Old Sir Patrick Cullen shocks the heretic's disciple by not even recognizing the name. "Bernard Shaw?" he ponders, "I never heard of him. He's a Methodist preacher, I suppose." Louis is horrified. "No, no. He's the most advanced man now living: he isn't anything." The old doctor is not set back an inch. These "advanced" men who impress the young by employing the accumulations of genius — he knows them. "I assure you, young man," he informs Louis, "my father learnt the doctrine of deliverance from sin from John Wesley's own lips before you or Mr. Shaw were born."

It is a pleasant thing to claim that the man you admire is "advanced" and to believe serenely that you are progressive along with him. It is also a convenient thing to employ such question-begging phrases as heterodox, radical, free-thinker, anarchist. The trouble with such phrases, indicative and exciting as they are, is their plain relativity to something reprehensible that only you yourself have in mind. The world is full of moss-grown places called Newtown and Newburg and Nyköbing and Neuville. It is also full of moss-grown writers who once were advanced and revolutionary. If a writer is to be paraded as heterodox it has to be shown

The Note-Books of Samuel Butler. Dutton, New York.

that he does something more than take up an agreeable position. It has to be shown that he has a manner, a method, of dealing with things that really deserve to be considered advanced.

This is Samuel Butler's claim on posterity. The urgently intelligent son of a dull English clergyman, he certainly did not lack incentives to heterodoxy. Besides that he was born in 1835 and was one of the first of Darwin's admirers, as later he was one of the first of his critics. But there was more than reflex action in Samuel Butler's heterodoxy. He was never anything so regular as an anarchist. He distrusted authority in religion and art and science without discarding religious, artistic or scientific values. He thought freely without being a free-thinker, and radically without being a radical. To say he was lawless would entirely misrepresent him, he was not nearly so much a revolutionary as a conscientious objector on the loose. Here again he fell into none of the ordinary classifications. He was not a missionary. He had as little ambition to form a new orthodoxy as to attach himself to an old one. He had a marked propensity, that of thinking for himself — one of those perplexing propensities that nothing seems to determine, that may occur in an emperor or his slave and no one know how or why. And that propensity, the capital distinction of his many-sided life, gave him emancipation in a way that no one could have predicted and that was long quite difficult to label.

It was difficult to label mainly because Samuel Butler's intellectual adventure had come to an end before the label was invented. Samuel Butler was above everything a pragmatist, one of those forerunners

of pragmatism who did not become conscious of its "universal mission" or its "conquering destiny," who nevertheless employed the method intuitively and "made momentous contributions to truth by its means." It is tragic, in many ways, that Butler had not the benefit of the formulation of pragmatism. Had he possessed it, however, he could not have been more closely, more consistently, its exponent. "Pragmatism," said William James in 1907, "represents a perfectly familiar attitude in philosophy, the empiricist attitude, but it represents it, as it seems to me, both in a more radical and in a less objectionable form than it has ever yet assumed. A pragmatist turns his back resolutely and once for all upon a lot of inveterate habits dear to professional philosophers. He turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad a priori reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins. He turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action and towards power. That means the empiricist temper regnant and the rationalist temper sincerely given up. It means the open air and possibilities of nature, as against dogma, artificiality, and the pretense of the finality of truth." This was the attitude Samuel Butler achieved for himself and the one which these Note-Books so fully and singularly exemplify.

There is a kind of man whose sensations come at the double, who must take them down as they fly by or lose them eternally. Butler's Note-Books were not kept for such a purpose. It was not his senses that were imperious for a scribe: it was his ruminations, his ideas. He was painter and musician as

well as writer, and he was writer in the most general interpretation, but his chief characteristic was not, so to speak, sensuous impressionability. It was an incessant intellectual activity. He had "the principle of stopping everywhere and anywhere to put down his notes, as the true painter will stop anywhere and everywhere to sketch," but the notes were not wild or woodland, they were memoranda in his endless discovery of wisdom. Occasionally the spectacle of the world urged him to record emotion, and he observes that from the age of twelve the music of his well-beloved Handel was never a day out of his head. But it was the opinions and ideas he derived from experience that stirred him to write in his Note-Books. Experience did not so much enamor him as stimulate his mind.

The vivacity of Samuel Butler's mind is astonishing. He was not brilliant in the sense that his expression was dazzling. Dazzling writers like George Meredith were distasteful to him, and he felt little of their need to give acuity to the words that were to convey poignant experiences. Neither did he wish to incite passion or ecstasy. He held everything, even his God, at arm's length, and the light by which he examined his world was daylight. Because of his sharp curiosity, however, his independence and audacity and humorous skepticism, he achieved that kind of penetrativeness which is often called brilliant. Penetrative he was to an extraordinary degree and over an area that few men of his time even dreamed of encompassing. He was dry on occasion and on occasion captious, but he never said a heartless thing or a foolish. And from the first line he wrote to the last there is not a single

dishonest utterance. Almost every one who writes is tempted now and then to say something which is not quite authentic, to use a hackneyed phrase if not a hackneyed thought. Samuel Butler authenticated everything he uttered. During his growing years and indeed all through his life he found himself brushed aside by the pundits. From pretentiousness he suffered as only a modest man can suffer, and he abhorred it. One result of it was to accentuate his own priestlessness and simplicity. He could easily have got himself up as an authority. It is a thing that almost any busybody with a plodding secretary can accomplish. Butler leaned over backwards to avoid doing it. He even went so far as to suspect everything that had the air of being professional, and to take a perverse pleasure in offering to machine-made scholars his own hand-made heterodox views. And not only were his views pragmatically decided, so were the bases on which he formed them. It is significant that though he was born in 1835 and lived to 1902 he got more out of Handel in music and Bellini in painting than out of any other masters. Homer and Shakespeare happened to interest him, but he paid no attention whatever to those "imaginary obligations" of an academic or journalistic order which keep most people from discovering what they really value. Tolstoy and Ibsen, Morris and Karl Marx, were Butler's contemporaries. They might as well have lived in Kamchatka for any chance they had of crossing the threshold of his hospitable but resolutely unfashionable mind.

Between the cravings of gregariousness and the exactions of his critical intelligence, then, Butler was



never at a loss to decide. But this severance from the crowd was not without an emotional result. There can be no doubt that he suffered some of the penalties of being an intellectual anchorite. From the egoistic rigidity that may so easily be the outcome of isolation — if not its promoter — he was preserved by common sense. Though he embraced the most difficult of experiments, the experiment of true independence, he kept on the right side of the thin partition mainly through avoiding the mistakes of that early ancestor who imagined God as solemn because "he was impressed with an undue sense of his own importance, and, as a natural consequence, he had no sense of humor." In spite of extreme common sense and humor, the price of being heterodox told on Butler. He was much too spirited to lament his exile, but sometimes he was cross-grained and spiritually dyspeptic. His dislike of Beethoven, Leonardo and Goethe was not mere buoyant unconventionality or admirable æsthetic sabotage. It had a slightly diseased contrariness. He was wonderfully outspoken about his own neglect and comparative failure, and exceedingly candid about his aspirations for fame, but all this would not prevent his being estranged from certain great men by very reason of their general acceptance. Those who are themselves frustrated cannot help the impulse to frustrate others, and the fact that his unaffected opinions were not fairly received sometimes gave Butler an animus in challenging opinions that were.

Unsparing pragmatism, however, kept him from being a crank and made him a priceless critic of what the sage has called "first and last things." And the freshest of his discriminations, the most un-

expected and the most unqualified, are to be found in his Note-Books. It is a common thing in life to hear some one bemoaning a talker whose music died in him. Here is a wise and humorous and varied man who preserved his observations as they sprang from him. It is monologue, it is true, rather deliberate and reasoned monologue editorially cut-and-dried. The fact remains that it is the essential Samuel Butler in his normal habit of mind. Under compulsion to think for himself, his Note-Books detect him in the process, and so represent the range and depth of his genius. That it was genius, though often blue in the cold of his era, there is no questioning. And it is peculiarly precious because it is liberating. It cannot but open the doors for those who have felt orthodoxies stifle them in their own attempt to think for themselves.



NOVELS AND NOVELISTS, 3





THE MODERN:

TONO-BUNGAY

LITERALLY Tono-Bungay is not the book of the week, but so astounding a novel must not be sacrificed to the calendar. Among the novels of the season it is preëminent, more than that, it is epochal. By epochal it is not intended to imply that Mr. Wells is already strutting among the ruins of the Athenæum. These epochs that book reviewers appoint are often very subtle, very sedate. They conform to Professor James's arrangement that the most violent revolutions in an individual's beliefs leave most of his old order standing. But they take place. And if an epoch can be marked by a single novel, one is marked by this astounding production.

Not to obtain the reader under false pretences, it may be intimated that Tono-Bungay teems with ideas, seethes with opinions, writhes with self-consciousness. Because it suggests the three-ring Thackerayan plot, and is crammed with philosophy, it has been set down as a mid-Victorian effusion. It is no more mid-Victorian than the Flatiron. To get a congruous idea of Mr. Wells one must take him for what he is, and not mutilate him by impossible comparisons.

Judging chiefly by the person revealed in Tono-Bungay, Mr. Wells is conspicuously and essentially

Tono-Bungay, by H. G. Wells. Duffield, New York.

not a gentleman. Conspicuously and essentially, Thackeray, Henry James, George Meredith are gentlemen. Their tradition is that of good breeding, fine feeling, the humanities and the arts. In their main effect they conform with the aristocratic code, as it exists in a freemasonry of class. Mr. Wells, on the contrary, does not accept this code or belong to this class. He has erupted into art over a drug counter, but not as a conscious and swaggering iconoclast. He is the new type, cultured polytechnically. He knows his Charles Lamb and his Richardson. He derives from them, too, but he was not spoon-fed on them. And what marks him as different from his gentlemanly compeers is his dogged determination to reveal himself, whether his feeling be fine feeling or coarse, his breeding high or low.

This self-revelation would be no great performance if Mr. Wells were simply candid. When literal candor registers nothing but sharp egoistic reaction its application, as in the case of Marie Bashkirtseff, is exceedingly narrow. But Mr. Wells, while occupied intensely with his own sensations, reactions and conclusions, is immensely busy with his prehensile intelligence. On that intelligence he tries everything; and he is vastly superior to the gentleman in so far as he is not confined to a coign of social vantage, but can stride into those closed chambers of the soul where the terrible operations of life are committed, but where the gentleman is not serious artist enough to enter.

It is not suggested that Mr. Wells, in being true to nature, is selecting to be true to the beast in nature. Mr. George Moore is enough of an artist to have no gentlemanly code, but he thinks that the inadequacies



of the gentleman can be supplied by the adequacies of the cad. For this Mr. Wells is too austere and serious a spirit. It has a silly enough sound, but let me say that he could be a gentleman if he would. He has, however, taken the problem of Life on his shoulders, and that problem he cannot solve with the limited gentlemanly code. It is a pity that he stops to jeer at the ritual of a cult which, after all, has its virtues. But at least we feel that Mr. Wells has broken out of the English convention with whatever wounds to himself, mainly because that convention had ceased to be decent enough and philosophical enough to hold him.

Mr. Wells attempts a racking derangement of all our standards when he takes away this gentlemanly standard, with its established directions to us upon all questions, directions as to how we should feel, how we should fall in love, how we should aspire, how we should believe, how we should know ourselves and declare ourselves. If we are not given the cue, how can most of us know what we are to think! And here is this creature, H. G. Wells, exhibiting in Tono-Bungay a man let loose in modern life who finds romance unromantic, religion irreligious and so on. And this too, without laying himself open in a single paragraph to the stock accusations that if he does not see life as the gentleman sees it, he must be a cad, a sneak, a pervert, a sensualist, etc.

Tono-Bungay has been acutely described as the history of the collision of the soul of George Ponderevo (narrator and nephew of the medicine-man) with his epoch: the arraignment of a whole epoch at the bar of the conscience of a man who is intellec-



tually honest and powerfully intellectual. But I prefer George's own words, which leave out the idea of "arraignment": "I suppose what I'm really trying to render is nothing more nor less than life — as one man has found it."

This word Life intimidates many novel readers, who are convinced that they get their bellyful of experience during the day, and want the novelist to soothe them like a masseur. To want to be soothed shows a pleasant instinct for entertainment, but I submit that we have no right to lie down, inert and devitalized, and expect Mr. Wells to pat us and to pet us. The challenge is a plain one. Tono-Bungay is occupied with the quests of the modern man, their fatuity as well as their complexity. If you really desire to understand this modern man you must, without complaining of the deponent, encounter Tono-Bungay.

There is nothing prurient, nothing finikin about Tono-Bungay. Nor in all its irresistible narrative is there subservience to the conventional. When Henry James first went to London, one won an exquisite literary disquisition, his imagination giving him release from reality. But when George Ponderevo goes up to London you get something preciously commonplace and common sense. "Yes, that first raid upon London under the moist and chilly depression of January had an immense effect upon me. It was for me an epoch-making disappointment. I had thought of London as a large, free, welcoming, adventurous place, and I saw it slovenly and harsh and irresponsive."

It is these epoch-making disappointments, these beams of intelligence through mists of "art" and



sentiment, that make Tono-Bungay an epoch-making novel. For, be it noted, there is a mould for all these raids upon London, ready-made and artistic. But Mr. Wells has smashed the mould and patiently, heroically, painfully cast his own. And we, whose impressions had been strained and dislocated in the old moulds, adapt ourselves gratefully to this new one. As to the manner of man whom Mr. Wells dispatches to London:

> London! I came up to it, young and without advisers, rather priggish, rather dangerously open-minded and very open-eyed, and with something — it is, I think, the common gift of imaginative youth, and I claim it unblushingly — fine in me, finer than the world and seeking fine responses. I did not want simply to live or simply to live happily and well; I wanted to serve and do and make — with some nobility. It was in me. It is in half the youth of the world.

"With some nobility." Very soon George, having elected to live, is helping his fussy promoter uncle, a Peruna uncle, to sell Tono-Bungay. George goes into it for seven years, against all his beliefs, for practical reasons.

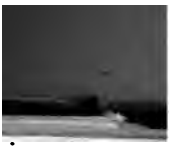
> So I made peace with my uncle, and we set out upon this bright enterprise of selling slightly injurious rubbish at one-and-three-halfpence and two-and-nine a bottle, including the government stamp. We made Tono-Bungay hum! It brought us wealth, influence, respect, the confidence of endless people. All that my uncle promised me proved truth and understatement; Tono-Bungay carried me to freedoms and powers that no life of scientific research, no passionate service of humanity could ever have given me. . . .

In sketching this typical "bright enterprise" Mr. Wells has not done anything so simple as to expose

the promoter and the present business system. He does caricature the plutocrat and ridicule to the point of anguish all the hero-worshippers and apologists and retainers who justify the speculator, either as inevitable or desirable. But in doing this, he is not an æsthete cavilling and whimpering at realities. Mr. Wells struggles steadily to understand, correlate and focus his epoch. In the country house, the gentleman's feudal estate now often occupied by mimetic Jews, he has the clue to England, which accounts, physically, for innumerable disconnected and distracting phenomena.

It is perhaps the philosophy that is newest and welcomest in Tono-Bungay. As a novel, it is far too exuberant, too unsifted. Mr. Wells has tried to cram everything, a whole epoch, into a single tale. For not only is there the country house in it, and the company promoter, and George as aërial navigator and builder of destroyers — but there is the entire delightful humor of the middle class in Ponderevo's aunt, and in George's private life there are three love experiences — the first with Marion, shallow, evasive, pathetic; the second a passion episode with a warmhearted, "magnificently eupeptic" typist; the third the romantic love with an aristocrat, spoiled aristocrat. And there is the Romance of the Sea in a sailing ship, a floating fragment of slum, and the romance of the tropics in a section where Mr. Wells is deliberately impish. But, whatever happens, it is the narrator, wielding commonplace and common sense, that reveals ourselves to ourselves.

As to the faults of Tono-Bungay, many exist. Perhaps the most serious is the lack of comedy. "There's no humor in my blood," George truly



says. "I'm earnest in warp and woof. I stumble and flounder, but I know that over all these merry immediate things, there are other things that are great and serene, very high, beautiful things — the reality. I haven't got it, but it is there nevertheless. I'm a spiritual guttersnipe in love with unimaginable goddesses. I've never seen the goddesses nor ever shall — but it takes all the fun out of the mud — and at times I fear it takes all the kindliness too."

There is the modernist; hard on himself and others, dark with doubt, shot with aspiration, beauty and hope. But the action is depressed where it might consistently be sprightly now and then. Not that Mr. Wells has to begin a chapter: "It was the day I was promoted to a tooth-brush." But he might at least remember that philosophically one is often completely miserable while factually one is exceedingly comfortable. Schopenhauer undoubtedly enjoyed both beefsteaks and sunsets. And this, or its æsthetic equivalent, the reasonable reader can expect, even if he is aware that amiability, gayety and chivalry are special arts of those who have sunk their moral principal in the prosy annuity of a code.

There is another point about Mr. Wells to disrelish, he is fond of hideous metaphors, metaphors from the refuse can and the scrap heap. "I resolved that if ever I found this polypus of Tact growing up in my soul, I would tear it out by the roots, throw it forth and stamp on it." This is stamping on tact with a vengeance, and unworthy of the man who can accomplish such clevernesses as "these Oxford men are the Greeks of our plutocratic empire." There were two lank sons "dressed in conscientiously untidy tweeds." "It's the pettiest thing to

record, I know, but she could wear curl papers in my presence." Or the girl in the library: "but really, as I found out afterward, she never read. She used to come there to eat a bun in quiet." Or the vicar on socialism: "'They have some intelligent people in their ranks, I am told,' said the vicar, 'writers and so forth. Quite a distinguished playwright, my eldest daughter was telling me,— I forget his name. Milly, dear! Oh! she's not here. Painters, too, they have. This socialism, it seems to me, is part of the Unrest of the Age.'" It takes a fine devotion to lend one's ears to such tattle and recall it and set it down.

Such is Tono-Bungay, with its inability to compromise ideals or extenuate curl papers. Such it is, with its observance of the great and golden rule that "the more distinct, sharp and wiry the boundary line, the more perfect the work of art." It is a book that the conservatives may not enjoy, but it extends the frontiers of the novel and sheds sanitary light on many dark places of the soul.

March 26, 1909.



THE POLITICAL COMET:

THE NEW MACHIAVELLI

IN Tono-Bungay H. G. Wells criticised the tragic farce of modern business with a cleverness incomparable. Where other men had scratched the surface, Mr. Wells ripped down with a clean surgical blade. The vulgarity of plutocrats, the fatuity of competition, the idiocy of modern Jew aggressiveness — these he attacked in a satire as sound as it was hard. Remarkable, too, was his version of modern love, from the standpoint of adventure and service. And apart from all its ideas Tono-Bungay was a vivid, nervous, quick-moving, multicolored picture of the modern city and the modern man.

Again, in The New Machiavelli, Mr. Wells gives us London and confused contemporary life. But there is hardly a word of business, except of the nouveaux riches in Staffordshire. The new Machiavelli is an Englishman of 42, whose political career has just been ended by divorce: the story gives that career autobiographically, in all its white passion of statecraft, and its "white passions struggling against the red."

The New Machiavelli is no more like the ordinary novel than a cup of blood is like a cup of milk. Into every line of the story Mr. Wells has put his wits, his imagination, his experience and his personality. Not only has he made his hero his own age exactly, not only has he made him the living ex-

The New Machiavelli, by H. G. Wells. Duffield, New York.

emplar of his own publicist ideas; he has even utilized such known experiences as his visit to Chicago (which place he flips away as an "amazing lapse from civilization").

How far Mr. Wells has gone in utilizing his personal experiences is his own affair. But that he has utilized both his known and his unknown experiences is quite clear; and one's most vital criticism of The New Machiavelli is that he has been "true to himself" in a literal sense at the expense of a wiser and more sophisticated truth. For in this amazing transcript of Mr. Wells's heart and mind, this amazing, headlong confession, there is precipitation of much which is irrelevant, fatuous and egotistic. In an autobiography such things suggest the living man. In a novel (which is intrinsically conventional) they suggest an author bursting with his own ego, and bursting not like a gas that turns into flame, but like a gas escaping in a room; and making a very unpleasant odor.

This is a dangerous thing to do, if one is born preacher oneself, and Mr. Wells is born preacher. One harangue succeeds another in The New Machiavelli (fine harangues in most cases) and in his own person H. G. Wells is continually speaking, continually inviting attention to his person. It destroys one's faith in the actuality of The New Machiavelli. It makes him a mask for God knows what personal purposes, and certainly not for the best purposes of art.

Yet as soon as one forgets the obtrusive, restlessly self-centred Mr. Wells, one does get the virus of his extraordinary excitement about life. Of this excitement, this hectic interest in affairs, hectic ambi-



tion, hectic curiosity, hectic desire to know and to be, to have others know and have others be, The New Machiavelli is the contagium. I say hectic because I think Mr. Wells is in many ways unsafe and insane. Produced in a metropolis and fed up on all sorts of urban notions, theories and ideas, he mistakes nightmares for visions and witty theorizing for important cerebration. Seeing more in a flash of lightning brain than one out of ten thousand, he still is subject to illucid intervals; and these intervals occur, as they are apt to occur with clever people, in dealing with people less clever. Mr. Wells's rapid little brain keeps rapping out criticisms that are astonishingly acute and astonishingly inhuman.

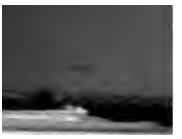
In psychology Richard Remington, the new Machiavelli, is very similar to the Mr. Wells of First and Last Things. He is an idealist who dreams of "a world of men better ordered, happier, finer, secure, . . . the ending of muddle and diseases and dirt and misery; the ending of confusions that waste human possibilities." His catch phrase is "Love and Fine Thinking." But although a social idealist loyal to ideas, Remington is no saint. The symbol of his state-making dream; Machiavelli is also the symbol of "his animal humor, his queer indecent side," his meanness, his selfishness, and his squalor.

Few careers could be more interesting than that of Remington, once he starts to mount politically, and Mr. Wells is unfailingly clear in showing the man's evolution: First he is intellectual, a young liberal, socialistically inclined. He is pushed by the Baileys, two self-appointed guardians of reform's Thermopylean Pass. Altiora Bailey is described by Mr. Wells with some sharpness. "Altiora thought

trees hopelessly irregular and sea cliffs a great mistake." Bailey is characterized with a pointed and almost personal malignance: "A nasty, oily, efficient little machine." Despite odious characteristics, however, these are profitable allies of Remington's, and he stays by them, breathing hard in their "tremendously scientific air" until long after Altiora has promoted his marriage.

Courtship is not romantic in Mr. Wells. The sex side of Remington is very frankly represented long before, perhaps more frankly than the sex side of any man in English fiction. From his first precocious glance, down through his "stark fact" period at Cambridge, and his celibate experience in London, there is nothing glossed over or concealed. Something may be misunderstood. If so, the misconception, the lack of beauty, is inherent in Mr. Wells. But what candor can give, he gives. And that is admirable. It is admirable not because it is beautifully done, but because it is done so honestly. Where all, even the best, have been evasive, it is magnificent that one should be true and explicit. The Anthony Comstocks may lie about it. They may say that Mr. Wells is salacious, indecent, indelicate and so on. As a matter of fact, Mr. Wells is coldly if eagerly clever. He is much less salacious than many medical textbooks. He tells part of the truth as it is known by adults; that is all. And only dirty-minded people like Anthony Comstock will object to it.

Being an English middle-class boy, Remington is brought up under the assumption that ignorance fosters idealism. The result is, as usual, inglorious. "I had had my experiences and secrets and adven-



tures," he says, "among that fringe of ill-mated or erratic or discredited women the London world possesses. The thing had long ago ceased to be a matter of magic or mystery, and had become a question of appetites and excitement, and among other things the excitement of not being found out." That sex should have become "a question of appetites and excitement" is an indication of what ignorance leads to, in a Remington. And no lovable woman saved Remington. "I had never yet even peeped at the sweetest, profoundest thing in the world, the heart and meaning of a girl, or dreamt with any quality of reality of a wife or any such thing as a friend among womanhood."

Margaret, a tepid character, is unfortunate to marry Remington. She is a good woman, depicted without prejudice; cultivated, moral and conventional. She would willingly die for her husband, but she must make an issue of his saying "damn." The estrangement is fated. From the start "trifling things began to matter enormously, that she had a weak and easily fatigued back for example, or that when she knitted her brows and stammered a little in talking, it really didn't mean that an exquisite significance was struggling for utterance." What Remington could not turn to delight made him bitter. He could not indulge without loving, and he did not love.

When a man who needs so much as Remington marries a woman so patently and pitifully inadequate as Margaret, what is he to do? Remington goes on as a "careerist," more and more occupied with political ideals, and now shifting, for Machiavellian reasons, from the Liberal to the Conserva-

tive machine. His ideas of party are amazingly vivid and significant. They exhibit at once the fluidity and the accessibility of his character. They do not for a moment sound like an executive's ideas, and they are full of wind, full of Zeitgeist. But they serve both Remington and Mr. Wells in the exposition of statecraft: they give excuse for as brilliant a chapter on the party system as one could hope to find anywhere.

One's fundamental criticism, however, is that Remington, esteeming himself tough-minded, is, as a fact, utterly and unhealthily critical of human nature, impatient of limitations in others, and in himself, that are "limitations" only from the standpoint of a "nasty, oily, efficient little machine." It is this prejudgment of human nature, this impatience of "chaotic indiscipline, ill-adjusted efforts, spasmodic aims," that makes Wells so querulous and so childish. He is too hard on himself, on this score, and much too hard on others. Were he strong enough, were we strong enough, to achieve his ideal, all would be well; the ideal is logical, spick-and-span. But not being strong enough as yet, nagging each other does no good. And one gets so tired of Mr. Wells's intrinsically stupid nagging, especially as the muddlement, the disorder, the indiscipline, the ill-adjustment, the spasmodic behavior, of his own hero are more and more confessed.

But while Remington's career preoccupies him, so long as no woman attracts him, he is in a peculiarly susceptible position when he meets Isabel Rivers. She is a person of the clearest charm, a delightful, lovable and admirable woman: and so much too good for Remington that one does not believe he would in



reality run away with her. For that is Wells's solution, his answer given without moral defense. He sends Isabel and Remington off together, the choosers of an evil. Whether the lesser or the greater, he does not dare to say.

After all the moil, all the contradiction, all the confusion, all the neurosis of Remington's life till he meets Isabel, it is a great relief to experience their big and heartfelt harmonies. The passages between them are beautiful, and wonderfully actual. The woman loves without stint, is clear-headed, unafraid and passionate. It is only when Remington tells his wife about it, tells her he "knew it was stupid, but thought it was a thing that wouldn't change, wouldn't be anything but itself, wouldn't unfold consequences," that one is utterly disgusted. In the same tone is the whine that "this business has brought me more bitterness and sorrow than I had ever expected to bear." In the same tone is the feeble protestation that there is "a sort of wild rightness about any love that is fraught with beauty." Would a man capable of such doubts, such maunderings about expediency, such reproaches and hand-wringing, be capable also of the final drastic step? One feels dubious. Remington wears fine feathers, but it is hard to believe they are his own. And when he hands Isabel over to a good, conventional man who wants to marry her, without one reflection as to what such prostitution means, the action consists much more with going back to his wife than with his final flaming resolution to take exile and love.

With so much to urge against the philosophy of this remarkable novel, it may seem captious to go

further and criticise its construction. But indeed it is badly put together and badly managed. Mr. Wells is a real stylist, a master of actuality, and the vignettes of London in The New Machiavelli are unmatched in contemporary fiction. Yet there is an excess of cleverness and a tiresome triteness of epithet. Over and over again Mr. Wells uses such words as "vast," "splendid," "enormous," "stupendous," "passionate," "irresistible," "extraordinary," "immense." These words are not exactly leprous, and several of them are applicable to the book itself; but in Mr. Wells they are extravagantly and flippantly used. And they give an effect of puerile sensationalism which a radical cannot afford.

But the bad construction is not a matter of heaped up epithets and ejaculatory statement. It is a matter of impeded and disconcerted narrative. The narrative is forever being halted for the sake of a sermon. No reminiscence seems to be complete without a debate, and no description without a moral. When one thinks of a masterly story like Jean-Christophe, this seems flimsy and ill conceived. It is held together by pins, strings, needles, tags, clips, everything but the conventional buttons and threads. "I'll tell you a little later," "It is very hard to tell," "I must go back a little way"— how distracting and inefficient.

It is this parvenu in Mr. Wells that leads him to take nothing for granted, that leads him to put the universe on trial. And, incidentally, it is this parvenu in him which makes him attempt to win distinction by shunning familiar names for most of his characters, and call them Blupp, Willersley, Mottisham, Clynes, Esmeer, Bunting Harblow, Clading-



bowl, Tumpany, Bulch, Pipes, Toomer, Waulsort, Rumbold, Minns, Tohrns, Kindling, Crupp, Flack, Wrassleton, Forthundred, Paddockshurst, Plutus, Fester, Panmure and Quackett. I resent all these odd names especially Quackett.

More serious is his effort to clear out weeds by slashing thistles with a vicious cane. More serious is his willingness to believe of the poor that "mean fears enslave them, and satisfactions decoy them." Such half truths are disheartening from Mr. Wells.

Perhaps the megalomania of Remington, of which these are symptoms, is deliberate. If so, I have read the book in the wrong spirit. And at any rate the book is a stimulant not to be refused. It is easy to understand people being apathetic to Mr. Wells. But while absence of desire sometimes indicates refinement, it more often indicates anæmia; and Mr. Wells challenges the anæmic. He is not a scrupulous artist. He writes in a riot of the blood. He undervalues the poised and the equable. His mind at present is restless, perplexed, feverish and unprincipled. And he favors change for its own sake, captiously. It is easy to repudiate many things in Mr. Wells. But he is better to assimilate than to reject. To assimilate him is to assimilate him as a man in whom there is much that is provocative (as where he criticizes Liberals) much that is suggestive (as where he criticizes the old ideals of education), much that is fine. He has the yeast of life in him, the microbe of adventure. And to exclude him is to cut off an influence which, if not wholly reasoned or successfully sublimated, still has vitality irresistible and staunch sincerities.

January 20, 1911.

RESHAPING THE WORLD:

THE RESEARCH MAGNIFICENT

SINCE The New Machiavelli something essential of H. G. Wells has been in a state of suspension. The Wife of Sir Isaac Harmon, The World Set Free, The Passionate Friends, Marriage — whatever their aim and success, they left a promise unfulfilled. But The Research Magnificent fulfills this promise. It is, to put it roughly, another epochal tale. It carries on the enterprise of the earlier confidential novels, carries on the immense task of focussing inclusively the epoch as Mr. Wells sees it, and his own spiritual relations to the epoch.

What this means is readily imaginable by the admirers of Mr. Wells. It is far more than the contribution of an orthodox novel. Orthodox novelists aim at the moving world from a fixed platform at best; mainly they take targets pinned on trees or pot at clay pigeons. They certainly do not attempt to dramatize their current philosophy in their version of the moving world. But this is precisely Mr. Wells's distinction. Not content, as he might be, to dramatize an epoch in an Old Wives' Tale, nor yet to give his philosophy the vivid but unhistoric epitome of a Sartor Resartus, he strives for the sake of reality to secure for his generalizations

The Research Magnificent, by H. G. Wells. Macmillan, New York.



the supremely telling corroboration of fiction. He seems determined in these revelatory novels to adhere very closely to his own spiritual experiences. But he aims also to fling his imagination hard enough out of autobiography to embody that experience in an authentic plot. It is a stupendous effort to make available all the torrents of his vitality.

So far as technique is concerned, he has never done better than here. The Research Magnificent is extremely eloquent. It has maturity, gravity, ardor. It has diversity of action and dazzling variety of scene. It has richness and sustainment of intention. Mr. Wells is not depending on old inspirations. As life goes on, fresh streams replenish him. The momentum of his genius cuts deep enough to release gorging waters from levels untapped before. To select, to compress, to order, to dominate this stream of visions, suggestions, moods, passions, inquisitions, resolutions, tendernesses, irritabilities; to keep out of irrelevancies and impostures — that is his modest task, and he has superbly performed it. The little Cockney bestrides the movement and imagery of the world.

But while Mr. Wells has invented the medium which could rightly accommodate his teeming mind, the bent of that mind is not necessarily to be so joyously acclaimed.

The career which Mr. Wells compacts in The Research Magnificent is a man's career, English and modern. Benham was born, one estimates, about 1882. The son of an estranged marriage, the father a fusty schoolmaster, the mother a bright and wealthy presence in London, he gravitated to his mother during his development as an intellectual in



Cambridge. He left Cambridge in 1903, brilliant but "unbalanced," coming into his unheralded fortune of $30,000 a year. He spent the next year in London at loose ends, much in the hands of a valet, postponing his Career, and having his affair with Mrs. Skelmersdale. Then, after a revulsion, he met Amanda —"a sunlit young woman with a leaping stride in her paces"— and married her out of hand in 1904, Amanda being nineteen. The "spirited honeymoon" took them to Italy, the Adriatic, Albania. The sunlit young woman, however, thirsted for London, an "enormous juicy fruit waiting for her pretty white teeth." They returned, Benham grimly at odds. He broke away in 1905, going to Russia after the murder of Sergius. He returned in November to find her demurely pre-maternal, destined to have his child. Christmas he spent in Moscow, went on to Rostov, Astrakhan, Herat. At Karachi he learned he was a father, the child a son. He hurried home. His son was "very red and ugly"— better than blue and ugly — and very soon he again departed. Amanda had meanwhile adventured for herself. Her letters became inanimate. Off Madras her certain unfaithfulness dawned on him. At Colombo his mother's flaming letter confirmed it. More carfare — he started home. His emotion evanesced at Amanda's ready submissiveness, her willingness to play double with the lover-slave. After the break he careered to Odessa, Bessarabia, Kieff; hurried on to the Swadeshi outbreak in India, continued to China, "that great teeming stinking tank of humorous yellow humanity." Germany he visited in 1910, America and Hayti. In 1913 he was in the midst of labor trou-

bles in Johannesburg, and there in a strike riot he was killed. His age would be about 31 or thereabouts, two years older than the woman he left, but did not suspend communication with, in 1906.

From this skeleton of dates and places no one could infer anything, and yet it is the skeleton which is clothed by the magnificent research. For this youngster's travels were not the pouncings of a restless plutocratic insect. They were deliberate and consecrated excursions into the "collective mind." When he left Cambridge thirsting for nobility, the only services that invited him were science, philosophy, politics. Accepting the latter, he rejected journalism and party, "plebeian's submission to the currents of life about him." To live nobly, to live thoroughly and dangerously, was his passion. And so, with travel as his means of education, he gave himself up to "the idea of working out for himself, thoroughly and completely, a political scheme, a theory of his work and duty in the world, a plan of the world's future that should give a rule for his life." His death, quite incidental, was in no way intended. It came out of a spurt of temperament, part of "the general humor of life."

Where Benham is most real to me is in his struggles to transcend fear and pain, his bravery in the jungle, his enforced courage in the mountains and his bravery in the ghetto of Kieff. Tiresome as are some of his problems—"should an aristocrat be deterred by the fear of smashing people up?"—he is unqualifiedly splendid in his account of the baser limitations; and there is rich humor in his self-willed behavior with the lickerish innkeeper in the Alps. All this is glorious. There is also something warm

about his intimacy with Prothero, the man without pride. But throughout the story there is something not glorious, some taint which is not remitted for all the continued apologia of Mr. Wells.

One sympathizes with Mr. Wells in his warranted hatred of confusion and muddle, his high impatience with triviality and futility, his rage against "mismanagement, fear, indulgence, jealousy, prejudice, stupidity," all the baseness that beguile the divinity in man. One is stirred profoundly by his vision of fine purpose and self-anointed zeal, by his sense that "we are working out a new way of living for mankind, a new rule, a new conscience." Nothing could be more inspiring than his conviction that men have only to resolve to be "lordly free, filled and sustained by pride." But the surprise of this novel is its conviction that everything muddled is popular and everything popular is muddled. The only people "worth consideration" are intellectuals, and of these only one seems to survive. Everything base is identified with democracy and the interchange of wills. There is almost shrieking emphasis that the greatest need in life is a predisposition to nobility and rule. Economic determinism is deposed. In its place, "richesse oblige." Mr. Wells talks like a neophyte of the governing class. His mind cracks with new-found responsibilities of nobility, and he cries from cover to cover for lordliness, kingliness, princeliness, knighthood, like an advance agent for some mystic shrine.

"This age of confusion is Democracy; it is all that Democracy can ever give us. Democracy, if it means anything, means the rule of the planless man, the rule of the unkempt mind. It means as a



consequence this vast boiling up of collectively meaningless things."

The Balkan states give him a further text. There isn't one element in that imbroglio "that deserves a moment's respect from a sane man."

You see this is what men are where there is no power, no discipline, no ruler, no responsibility. This is a masterless world. This is pure democracy. This is the natural state of men. This is the world of the bully and the brigand and assassin, the world of the mud-pelter and the brawler, the world of the bent woman, the world of the flea and fly, the open drain and the baying dog. This is what the British sentimentalist thinks a noble state for man.

How is one to account for this dreary nonsense? I confess I can only do so by suggesting a scrutiny of the conflict between Benham and Amanda. Mr. Wells convinces himself that the relation is understandably wrecked on the rock of the research magnificent.

Amanda loved wild and picturesque things, and Benham strong and clear things; the vines and brushwood amidst the ruins of Salona that had delighted her had filled him with a sense of tragic retrogression. Salona had revived again in the acutest form a dispute that had been smoldering between them throughout a fitful and lengthy exploration of north and central Italy. She could not understand his disgust with the mediæval color and confusion that had swamped the pride and state of the Roman Empire, and he could not make her feel the ambition of the ruler, the essential discipline and responsibilities of his aristocratic idea. While his adventurousness was conquest, hers, it was only too manifest, was brigandage. His thoughts ran now into the form of an imaginary discourse, that he would never deliver to her, on the decay of states, on the triumph of barbarians over

rulers who will not rule, on the relaxation of patrician orders and the return of the robber and assassin as lordship decays.

This account of male and female may convince some people, especially with the later apologia. "I'm an overstrung man. I go harshly and continuously for one idea. I live as I ride. I blunder through my fences. I take off too soon. I've no natural ease of mind or conduct of body." It is very touching. But if the natural predisposition to rule gave us many Amandas I should be all for putting chipped ice on the head of the ruler. It seems to me a quite ordinary case of muddled and desolating egoism, with the Research as a convenient afterthought. As for the conclusion that there are as yet "no feminine aristocrats, rulers and mates of rulers," it is the kind of repudiation which rebounds on the man by whom it is made.

One of the extraordinary facts about this extraordinary novel is that the child born to Benham is absolutely never mentioned subsequent to his birth. Sir Philip Easton —"Pip"— apparently fathers it. Benham, at any rate, the real father, literally never gives it a second thought. It is a coldness not easy to explain.

Mr. Wells wants perfection, but he seeks to arrive by aviation. He wishes to soar over "the naïve passions and self-interest of the common life." It is a high ambition and it has produced a wonderful book in The Research Magnificent. Yet the book does not seem to me to possess fundamental truthfulness. Genius, nobility and sick egoism combine in it, to the additional muddle of mankind.

September 25, 1915.



MR. WELLS DISCOVERS GOD:

MR. BRITLING

To write a novel on the heels of direct experience is one of Mr. Wells's greatest gifts. It is as simple for him to tell a story embodying the moods of the minute as for a camera to catch a diver in mid air. Most men take years to bring their own relations into focus. It is the convention for men to wait until their own story is finished before they write their autobiography with a palsied hand. Mr. Wells has for a long time vigorously disregarded this convention. He no more needs the stability of historical consensus for his guidance than a lightning calculator needs a pencil and pad. Mr. Wells does not simply take the background of his own time into consideration. He takes the shifting ideas, the kaleidoscopic mind. This is irregular. It is "journalistic." It is the introduction of spit-ball methods into fiction. It is speeding up the profession of novel-writing in an anti-union way. In spite of its parvenu aspect, however, it is Mr. Wells's greatest triumph, and it now enables him to write a genuine novel of the war.

Mr. Britling may seem autobiographical. It is a happy circumstance of authorship that those experiences which Mr. Wells recently suffered as a middle-aged Englishman in the Zeppelin area should

Mr. Britling Sees It Through, by H. G. Wells. Macmillan, New York.

be resumed so substantially by Mr. Britling. Mr. Britling is not, however, Mr. Wells. No good novel could be strictly autobiographical. To suppose that a novel is autobiographical is to accuse a painter of using actual grass on his canvas. It is to put imaginative integrity out of the question. Mr. Britling is not Mr. Wells. He is merely a sympathetic twin caught by Mr. Wells in the astonishing act of duplicating Mr. Wells's experiences. Between them there is a decent severance. Mr. Wells can hold Mr. Britling in his eye. But because Mr. Wells is himself a prosperous Englishman between 40 and 50, a writer on world affairs, a married man with children, a person of the same courageous, hopeful, gusty, amorous disposition, a person writing a very similar handwriting and with almost the same intonations, we can congratulate ourselves on the facility with which Mr. Britling can be affixed. It is not sound to identify Mr. Wells completely with his own Mr. Britling. That would be subtly yet infinitely misleading. But it is important immensely that Mr. Wells has conceived a gentleman standing pretty much in the same shoes. Mr. Wells can, on that account afford to say, "I *know* my Britling." We in turn, haply interested in the author, can after due allowance observe, "So much the better do we know our Wells."

We not only know him better, we know him as never before. There is no intimation of class or quality in saying "Wells's new book." He is as variable as he is varied. He is so much a genius that nothing about him can be predicted beforehand, not even his genius. He has a mind like a Klondike and as many surprises as the gold-rush territory it-



self. But this novel of the war, serialized to its own detriment as it was, can be defined as a glorious success. It is so much a novel of genius as to end oscillation as to Mr. Wells's perceptions. It cannot fail for some readers to mean a permanent resumption of belief in the spiritual intelligibility of Mr. Wells.

It is a little worse than useless, so far as such reassurance is concerned, to say that Mr. Britling is a novel of the war. There are things that Mr. Wells has said about the war which had not, so to speak, spiritual intelligibility. One of them was that little spurt of cold fury which was shot at America in the Everybody's symposium — a sort of venomed transatlantic spit. Because he loved England Mr. Wells looked on America in the way the wife of a hero who is being walloped might look on a cautious, legally righteous, non-interfering friend next door. And when Mr. Wells is moved under such circumstances he employs the cool style of the publicist to carry the spleen of Seven Dials. But it is not that kind of novel which Mr. Wells has written in Mr. Britling Sees It Through. There is in H. G. Wells a great deal of passionateness which leads him to lash out at everything which crosses him, to speak with bristling contemptuousness of one order of beings after another. In that he is like the sanguine, generous Mr. Britling. But the value of Mr. Britling is its revelation of this apparently feral nature under the supreme test of a highly nationalistic war. Then the wildness is found to be nothing worse than the violence of sensitiveness, a sensitiveness that in another mood is the magic carpet to all that is alien. Goaded at first by the war, Mr.

Britling ends by interpreting even bereavement. He ends by "seeing it through." And in the processes of searching his soul he does not rest on his first impulse, to maintain merely the assailed goodness of England, "the deep and long unspoken desire for kindliness and fairness." He faces "the deeper riddles of essential evil and of conceivable changes in the heart of man." He avoids the allurements of "ineffective gentleness." He goes through the "pessimistic pit." He comes to admit that the issues of the war lack the simple greatness that would make the stern happiness of stoicism possible. He accepts the existence of "the truer Germany that is thought and system" and acknowledges its conflict with an England not all ways great. In the account of these mutations there is a candor so passionate and thorough, a humor so large and lovable, a self-knowledge so humble, that one can hardly restrain admiration. It is a change from the contentiousness of Mr. Wells, as if trip-hammers made music and dentists employed wooden needles.

"The reversional trend given by warlike experience and warlike preoccupation," says Thorstein Veblen, makes "for a reversion to the Grace of God." Perhaps it is that that helps Mr. Britling to seem mellow. But the best of the book appears to me to come before this note is struck. I can understand Mr. Britling discovering God, his God of limited liability.

> Hitherto God had been for him a thing of the intelligence, a theory, a report, something told about but not realized. . . . Mr. Britling's thinking about God hitherto had been like some one who has found an empty house, very beautiful and pleasant, full of the promise of a fine personality. And

then as the discoverer makes his lonely, curious explorations, he hears downstairs, dear and friendly, the voice of the Master coming in. . . . There was no need to despair because he himself was one of the feeble folk. God was with him indeed, and he was with God. The King was coming to his own. Amidst the darknesses and confusions, the nightmare stupidities and the hideous cruelties of the great war, God, the Captain of the World Republic, fought his way to empire. So long as one did one's best and utmost in a cause so mighty, did it matter though the thing one did was little and poor.

One can understand it, this God as companion of the urgent soul, this generous adjustment of so passionate a nature to the necessities of a world in change.

To Mr. Britling in his hours of nocturnal imagination, hours when the molehills throw mountainous shadows on the mind, the world readily became an egg, and "he had the subconscious delusion that he had laid it." Instead of encouraging this delusion, as Mr. Wells seemed to do in The Research Magnificent, he gives it deeply humorous interpretation. There are adventures asking for courage and greatness in Mr. Britling, although he is only "a writer, a footnote to reality." But there is no urgent feeling that the world must advert to him or blow up.

Perhaps because Mr. Wells has these proportions for Mr. Britling, the book seems unusually witty. "Britain was not a state — it was an unincorporated people." "What is the good of all this clamoring for a change of government. We haven't a change of government. It's like telling a tramp to get a change of linen." Mr. Britling "pointed all too plainly at America." "There's two sorts of liberal-

ism — there's the liberalism of great aims and the liberalism of defective moral energy."

Mr. Wells's American, Mr. Direck, is not entirely successful. He accords with the British convention by which Americans are all rather like Gerald Stanley Lee, and is full of points about America — points that don't tickle one's gizzard as hard as such hard points ought to. But there is delicious sympathetic chronicle of Mr. Direck in love. "Mr. Direck's mood was an immense solemnity, like a dark ocean beneath the vast dome of the sky, and something quivered in every fibre of his being, like moonlit ripples on the sea."

It is convenient to believe you love just once. It is attractive to sentimentalize about youth, once it is over. It is natural to put down harassing "cosmic solicitudes" as "the last penalties of irreligion." These are possible weaknesses in the philosophy adumbrated in Mr. Britling. But a finer use has never been made by Mr. Wells of his great faculty for bringing his age into focus. Posterity alone can judge whether Mr. Wells pickles experience so quickly that it cannot be expected to remain pickled. Certainly the process is to the advantage of the present reader. And it is to the honor of an England still engaged in war.

October 7, 1916.

MR. WELLS ESPOUSES GOD:

THE SOUL OF A BISHOP

MR. WELLS has made a supreme effort to translate through this bishop of his a genuine religious upheaval. As befits his own recent avowal of religious conviction, his bishop is not taken satirically or egregiously. He is a regular English bishop thought out and felt out, one with a ring and purple episcopal pyjamas, with five daughters and Lady Ella, a bishop who sneaks off with his neurasthenia to the twilight garden to smoke a forbidden cigarette — true churchman thick with idiosyncrasy and rich with local color who is the very bull's eye of that orthodoxy which Mr. Wells is out to hit.

It is a fascinating performance. Scrope is probably the most elaborate extra-personal characterization in Mr. Wells's highly personal fiction. But documented and authenticated as the man is, there is a thinness about his spirit that is ghostly, and the emphasis on God in him is like the ardent clasping at a wraith. He is insubstantial in humanity, principally because the substance of the novel — the escape from the torpor of the established church to a personal non-institutional God — is the product of a mind that in critical vigor appears to be at ebb-tide.

In one aspect the agility of Mr. Wells is astounding, his receptivity is a bewilderment. He has an

The Soul of a Bishop, by H. G. Wells. Macmillan, New York.

extensiveness of experience, and a nimbleness of mind to accompany that extensiveness, that makes the ordinary human being feel like a lump of clay. Where you or I would hesitate out of that caution which is partly calculation, partly habit, partly consistency, Mr. Wells plunges in with a whoop and a flourish, and then, free in a new milieu, procures whatever justification is to be had. Whether it is God that his hero is embracing, or only a mistress, there is the same precipitation, the same ratification later on. For always Mr. Wells has the same masterly opinionativeness. A born pamphleteer, he has the most effective of all the persuasions that go to make partisanship dangerous — he is convinced that beyond everything else he is intellectually honest and hard and clear. On his lips there is the shibboleth "modern," as if fashion were a clew to rightness; and, conceiving the larger part of sincerity to be obedience to immediate conviction, Mr. Wells is never at a loss for sincerity because convictions are his stock in trade.

But in some matters, particularly in this matter of religion, one questions the attitude of a writer who develops strong convictions too readily. There is too much about the architecture of Mr. Wells's convictions that reminds one of the bright expediency of a World's Fair. He produces his palaces overnight. They cometh up as the flowers. They glisten in fresh splendor in the face of a gratified sun. But they have no sewerage. They are not rainproof. They stand wind and weather very badly. And as soon as the particular show for which they were erected is over, they have to be blown up with dynamite and cleared away. A quickness in arriv-

ing at convictions is an admirable thing. It is indispensable to men of action. But the sense of responsibility that keeps a man of thought from simulating the effectiveness of a man of action is not all conservatism, not all academic pokiness. Part of it is a realization that in the realm of ideas the premium ought to be put on genuine sincerity — not merely the utterance of conviction but the testing of it, the contract carried out as well as the contract rosily signed.

In regard to sex we now know precisely how Mr. Wells feels about untested relationships. "Only after years can one be sure of it"; he says of quasi-sacramental union, "it is not brought about by vows and promises but by an essential kindred and cleaving of body and spirit." And again, "It is difficult to imagine how the association of lovers and friends can be very fine and close and good unless the two who love are each also linked to God, so that through their moods and fluctuations and the changes of years they can be held steadfast by his undying steadfastness." Yet this argument as to the validity of conviction is the last one proposed or encountered in the flop that Mr. Wells makes into religion. He just flops, and no sooner does he attain religious beliefs than he declares them, and no sooner does he declare them in a short treatise on God than he produces a novel dramatizing these beliefs in the history of a personality. It is not a new process with him. Every great experience of his life has induced a convulsion in his ideas, and every convulsion a dramatization. This does not mean that he is slavishly autobiographical. It simply means that, conveniently enough, Mr. Wells is a thinker in relation to

his experiencings, and that it satisfies him to embody in a story the immediate reality that has suddenly, oh so suddenly, dawned on him.

The Soul of a Bishop should, of course, be read first of all as a story — for its development of a distinctive character. The man who writes the novel is still the Mr. Wells who reads newspapers omnivorously and whose swarming, inchoate, multi-national world is largely the world of jostling headlines and competitive news. But in spite of the "vision" that serves to shake out these divers pepper-pot allusions, the story is much more concentrated and unified than usual, the theme being the bishop's struggle through the debility of impossible compromises to an understanding that "man's true environment is God." Much of that struggle is an adaptation of God the Invisible King. The religion at which the ex-bishop arrives is the religion at which Mr. Wells arrived a little previously, only the course that the bishop takes is suggestive of every dubious element in contemporary sacerdotalism. The theme is handled by Mr. Wells like a virtuoso. It gives him a chance to open out the heart of the episcopate, to show the silliness that masquerades in perfumed religiosity, the amusing and contemptible compromises of a monarchical church. It also allows him to dramatize conversion in a series of magnificent visions induced by a strange medicine, in which there is actually a touch of ecstasy. An angel appears, "a figure of great strength and beauty, with a smiling face and kindly eyes," and the bishop has the courage to speak to him.

"I want," he said, "to know about God.

"I want," he said, with a deepening passion of the soul,

" to know about God. Slowly through four years I have been awakening to the need of God. Body and soul I am sick for the want of God and the knowledge of God. I did not know what was the matter with me, why my life had become so disordered and confused that my very appetites and habits are all astray. But I am perishing for God as a waterless man upon a raft perishes for drink, and there is nothing but madness if I touch the seas about me. Not only in my thoughts but in my under thoughts and in my nerves and bones and arteries I have need of God. You see I grew up in the delusion that I knew God. I did not know that I was unprovisioned and unprovided against the tests and strains and hardships of life. I thought that I was secure and safe."

It is the church, the creed, that have est anged him from his religion, made him throw out the Savior with the orthodoxy.

"*And the truth?*" said the bishop in an eager whisper. "You can tell me the truth."

The Angel's answer was a gross familiarity. He thrust his hand through the bishop's hair and ruffled it affectionately, and rested for a moment holding the bishop's cranium in his great palm.

"But can this hold it?" he said.

"Not with this little box of brains," said the Angel. "You could as soon make a meal of the stars and pack them into your belly. You haven't the things to do it with inside *this*."

He gave the bishop's head a little shake and relinquished it.

He began to argue as an elder brother might.

"Isn't it enough for you to know something of the God that comes down to the human scale, who has been born on your planet and arisen out of Man, who is Man and God, your leader? He's more than enough to fill your mind and use up every faculty of your being. He is courage, he is

adventure, he is the King, he fights for you and with you against death."

"And he is not infinite? He is not the Creator?" asked the bishop.

"So far as you are concerned, no," said the Angel.

"So far as I am concerned?"

"What have *you* to do with creation?"

Which is quite a retort, but if "this little box of brains" is incompetent, then why *isn't* God a Creator and why isn't the creed everything the bishops say it is? If one is going to surrender one's intelligence, why not to a Pope or to the dictator of a creed?

"Our country is at war and half mankind is at war; death and destruction trample through the world; men rot and die by the million, food diminishes and fails, there is a wasting away of all the hoarded resources, of all the accumulated well-being of mankind; and there is no clear prospect yet of any end to this enormous and frightful conflict. Why did it ever arise? What made it possible? It arose because men had forgotten God. It was possible because they worshiped simulacra, were loyal to phantoms of race and empire, permitted themselves to be ruled and misled by idiot princes and usurper kings. Their minds were turned from God, who alone can rule and unite mankind, and so they have passed from the glare and follies of those former years into the darkness and anguish of the present day."

It is easy to imagine that thousands of people will like the tenor of this sermon by the bishop. With its ample answer to poignant questioning Mr. Wells will reach the layer of readers that used to be Harold Bell Wright's, Marie Corelli's, and perhaps Hall Caine's. But it will be for the solace in his words, not their exemplification of a bishop's intelli-

gence, that these passages will most be appreciated.

No one writing in English today compares with H. G. Wells as a novelist of ideas. As a story-teller he is extraordinarily vibrant and effective, and he can no more get on without conclusive ideas in a fresh situation than a man can get on without a skin. But in this instance, for the proper enjoyment of The Soul of a Bishop, it is necessary to differentiate between the book's contribution to ideas and its contribution to art. The bishop is a bleak creature, largely because Mr. Wells invented him to fulfill a fictional purpose. Characterized with amazing cleverness, he is still essentially a bobbin on whom the religious thread is wound. The cordiality, the rushing sympathy and kindness and fellowship that religious men in Russian novels express in every relation, have no place in this egoist's religious escape from neurasthenia. The bishop is sincere in seeking an explanation of the universe, but it is an explanation that is to give courage and youth and adventure, the attributes of the self-concerned man. Moving from this to the ideas that the book presents, there is a frank wonder on my own part that Mr. Wells can take with such seriousness so monarchical and regimental a God. For a man who has always had a goading ideal of self-discipline this is a natural enough God to manufacture, eminently a God of service and efficiency, but he is a curiously local and immediate and personal evocation, heavily mortgaged to the present kind of world. If one is going to have a God, why not step outside the diocesan habits of mankind? What led Mr. Wells to suppose that contemporary religion has anything whatever to say about the purposes or destinies of



mankind? In his vertical ascent in English society Mr. Wells has come unprepared on the establishment of bishops. He has given the idea of them too much significance. Whatever way the meaning of life lies, it probably does not lie God-ward, and it is difficult to be entirely respectful of Mr. Wells's latest impetuous and incontinent adventure.

September 22, 1917.

THE OLD WIVES' TALE

NOT with simple expectancy does one come to The Old Wives' Tale. Mr. Robertson Nicoll has pronounced it a really great novel. Max Beerbohm, whose taste is catholic but certainly not crass, has called it a masterpiece. Such praise from the discriminate stirs one's blood. A great novel! A masterpiece! The writer who says "masterpiece" has uttered the carissima of his profession. It is the Almighty and Everlasting of criticism. He can no more. And men like Max Beerbohm, who have honor as critics, wind an inviting horn when they proclaim a novel great.

Mr. Bennett's novel justifies its critics. On conventional grounds the book is impressive. It has dimension, size, solidity. Modern in temper, it is neither flashy nor flimsy in material. But what are the heavy battalions without their Napoleon? The detail and circumstance of this novel would mean nothing if it didn't move, honest and self-possessed, on springs of wise invention.

The Old Wives' Tale is a novel of many parts, many distinctions, of which the chief distinction is not its delightful length nor its originality of subject, but its general spirit, its superb common sense. In fiction it is usual for the writer to pretend to the reader that life is a very wonderful, very extraordinary affair, made up of the most surprising adven-

The Old Wives' Tale, by Arnold Bennett. Doran, New York.

tures and the most punctual and terrific emotions. It is easy to draw to this Brobdignagian scale which no one can correct, and very hard to draw to the scale of normal and familiar man, which any one can correct. Hence common sense, "our gold crushed out of joy and pain," is the rarest as it is the most valuable quality in imaginative writing.

To achieve this beautiful realism, which is a vision of life conditioned to actual needs, is not to produce the crapulous or the banal. It is the sentimentalist who is afraid that if one rings at truth's door one will bring out a corrupt and leering monster. He alone is certain of natural viciousness, and hides his own nature in the darkness of night; his scampering heart taking for the pitfall what in daylight is the necessary drain. The realist, as seen in Mr. Bennett, is one whom irony and sympathy alike remove from the sentimentalist — supposing sentimentalism to imply the effemination of the soul, "the absence both of clear reason, and also of the one other thing, besides religion and country, that the comic spirit respects, simple and healthy passion."

career as a complete drama in itself, a drama of

Adopting the old method, accepting the human which the laws are inscrutable, Mr. Bennett has told without digression the story of Constance and Sophia, daughters of an English provincial draper. With single purpose, he has kept to the bourgeoisie, from the sixties to the nineties. The accidents of life divert Sophia to Paris, but she stays in her class, and in her era, and The Old Wives' Tale remains a unified picture of the kin to which most of us belong, with limited romance of achievement, and unlimited possibility of soul.

It is because he perceives and values these opportunities of the soul that Mr. Bennett writes of drapers and confectioners from no absurd distance. Drapers also are made in the image of God. The human comedy, with certain ludicrous interludes, and a desperate cruelty to the pious and the sentimental, goes on with no great peculiarities of mood among the Baineses, the Poveys, the Scaleses, Aunt Harriet and Aunt Maria, Maggie and Maud.

It is through Sophia and Constance that this drama, after a slow preliminary, is enacted in all those abrupt and apparently haphazard chapters dictated by the passions and the catastrophes of common life.

Constance is pliant, amiable, sensible, and her fate inevitably leads her to "fall in love" with Samuel Povey, the youngish man on whose shoulders fall many of the duties relinquished by her bed-ridden father. Sophia, in contrast, is vivacious, proud, high-spirited, willful. She is a trial to her sagacious mother, and family conflicts are many. The mother's wisdom is an unfailing irritant. "She had prophesied a cold for Sophia, the refuser of castor oil, and it had come."

After some years of imperfect understanding at home, Sophia captivates an attractive young "drummer." She loses her heart. He proposes elopement. She goes to London. The interview in which he tries to evade the question of marriage is marvelous sexual analysis, with mingled exaltation, wile and sensuality. Gerald Scales marries Sophia. With his supposedly vast fortune of 12,000 dollars, they go to Paris. Sophia painfully learns, what she "might have divined from that adorable half-femi-



nine smile, that she could do anything with Gerald except rely on him." When they come to hate each other, she is too proud to write home. "She was ready to pay the price of pride and of a moment's imbecility with a lifetime of self-repression."

At last, after four spendthrift years, Gerald deserts her. She passes through poverty and disease. Her will hardens to steel. Love knocks at the door but her instinct rebels.

"She knew that she wanted love. Only she conceived a different kind of love: placid, regular, somewhat stern, somewhat above the plane of whims, moods, caresses, and all mere fleshly contacts. Not that she considered that she despised these things (though she did)! What she wanted was a love too proud, too independent, to exhibit frankly either its joy or its pain. She hated a display of sentiment. And even in the most intimate abandonments she would have safe reserves, and would have expected reserves, trusting to a lover's powers of divination, and to her own! The foundation of her character was a haughty moral independence, and this quality was what she most admired in others."

While Sophia is becoming the hard managerial boarding-house keeper, Constance is experiencing in her person the history of her kind. In The Old Wives' Tale babies are never found under a gooseberry bush. Constance's confinement is described as befits so supreme and solemn an event. Cyril is the fruit of her union. Cyril gives a tea party when he is four and misbehaves dreadfully. Cyril goes to school. Cyril steals a florin out of the till. Many and brilliant are the adventures of Cyril. But they

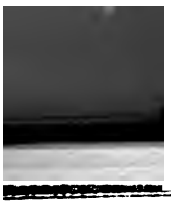


are all swallowed up, like a toyshop in an earthquake, when Cyril's middle-aged cousin kills his drunkard wife by accident.

The law lays grim hand on Daniel. Samuel Povey, who looks up to this cousin, makes his cause his own. He engages the barrister, gets up a petition, excites the community, neglects his business, his health. The law, with curious indifference to the terrible emotions of Samuel, hangs Daniel Povey. Samuel contracts pneumonia. "He survived the crisis of the disease and then died of toxæmia, caused by a heart which would not do its duty by the blood." There is virtuosity for you! "A casual death, scarce noticed in the reaction after the great febrile demonstration! Besides Samuel Povey never could impose himself on the burgesses. He lacked individuality. He was little. I have often laughed at Samuel Povey. But I liked and respected him. He was a very honest man. I have always been glad to think that, at the end of his life, destiny took hold of him and displayed, to the observant, the vein of greatness which runs through every soul without exception. He embraced a cause, lost it, and died of it."

Constance, the widow, fails to hold Cyril, who has hankerings after art. But her life takes on a new complexion when a clew to the vanished Sophia is discovered and when Sophia herself, pulled down in health, eventually returns to Bursley.

The two sisters, after diverse experiences, find themselves together at fifty. In Sophia the ferment of life is still active. She has "outgrown" Bursley. She tries in vain to induce Constance, who is comfortably off, to move. "It was scarcely conceivable



that they should be living in the very middle of a dirty, ugly, industrial town because Constance mulishly declined to move." But Constance is set in her ways. Sophia inflicts changes, dismisses the old servant, fights the dirt, yet on the whole is a comfort, if not a spiritual companion to her sister.

Then when Sophia is sixty, Gerald Scales is announced to be in Manchester, dangerously ill. Sophia goes, teeth set for the encounter, but there is no occasion. Gerald is dead before she arrives. She sees him. She had not pictured him old. She beholds him dead, and it moves her to the core:

> What affected her was that he had once been young, and that he had grown old, and was now dead. That was all. Youth and vigor had come to that. Youth and vigor always came to that. He had ill treated her; he had abandoned her; he had been a devious rascal; but how trivial were such accusations against him! The whole of her huge and bitter grievance against him fell to pieces and crumbled. She saw him young, and proud, and strong, as for instance when he had kissed her lying on the bed in that London hotel — she forgot the name — in 1866; and now he was old, and worn, and horrible, and dead.

That is the end of Sophia. The strain of her silent interview is too great. And after her death, the tragedy of her career, passionate, eager, masterful and futile, fills with pity that placid woman Constance, whose end comes tranquilly, after years of sciatica, borne with much forbearance.

It is Mr. Bennett's triumph that he has given in the most loving and delicious detail the plain story of these plain lives, and sacrificed neither the romance implicit in every human story nor the implicit philosophy which is the gist of such story repeated.



Not that a novel should directly be "a light to guide, a rod to check the erring and reprove." But to give one a sensation is not enough. Literature which treats of death and birth, passion and pain, must confront these mysteries morally as well as artistically. It is the moral atmosphere of The Old Wives' Tale that makes it great. I am afraid that Mr. Bennett is somewhat jovial about God. But it is the God that is preceded by a cross breakfast and followed by a Gargantuan Sunday dinner, the Staffordshire Jehovah, that Mr. Bennett is pleasantly jovial about. Concerning the instinct that puts something above pleasure, Mr. Bennett is serious. It is not to the intoxication of ideas or to the "ruthless egoism of happiness" that he yields himself finally. He admires the Spartan virtues, the severe Spartan joys.

Yet however he may admire tenacity of ideal and power of will, he is no dogmatist. And he laughs at every one of his creatures in turn, at their silly sense that their toothache, their ache of childbirth, is the most important, most terrible ache in the world — at the mother who has the bitterness of age against uncompromising youth which expects to consummate its vague dreams and grudges to find things "so obstinately, so incurably unsentimental."

It is this moral atmosphere that gives the novel its advantage over a work of such meticulous realism as Esther Waters. George Moore observed Esther Waters. Arnold Bennett experienced Sophia Baines. So he experienced Constance, and so Samuel Povey. And for that reason he has forgotten nothing, neither the ancestral bed nor the bad Landseer copy, nor the dark kitchen alley, in the

Bursley background. When Mr. Bennett gives you these things he is giving you the idiom of his life. When George Moore gives you these things he is giving you the idiom of Zola's life.

Mr. Bennett's style is clear and unaffected. It has "a modesty so proud that it scorns ostentation." Sedate but vivacious in ordinary narrative, it is best in the crucial scenes where simplicity and vigor are effective. Mr. Bennett's knowledge of his characters is inexhaustible. Moreover, one is certain he has come to see life for himself, though he never sacrifices his story to the pleasure of orienting himself.

Most delightful are the engrossing fictional uses he has found for workaday life and bourgeois virtue. With all his realization of facts, known to the angelic as sordid, he is at heart gay, not for an instant acrid. If he is never rapt, never exalted, never conscious of any but the moral divinity in man, it is because Bursley is not Dionysiac. There is no glamour in The Old Wives' Tale, no illusion.

Again Bursley is to blame. For Bursley is bourgeois life, the life which bakes bread, and scrubs floors, and backs bills, and bears children, and is not vain enough, or mad enough, or brain enough to ask for the answer to the riddle.

August 27, 1909.



CLAYHANGER

WHEN Mr. Bennett did The Old Wives' Tale people sagely accepted it as his peak performance. Hugo and The Statue and other novels written in bland compromise encouraged this judgment. Every man is supposed to contain "one great novel," and it was easy to believe that Mr. Bennett had shot his bolt. For evidence, one took his own words, his easy deprecations, his glib manner in The Truth About an Author. But one reckoned without one's Englishman. In The Old Wives' Tale, Mr. Bennett was cautiously feeling his way. He was venturing his surplus knowledge of life before he would let the public into his fastnesses. Now, in Clayhanger, this extraordinary man has firmly guided his readers again through a wonderful series of events, events to which every man is born heir, but of which few are consciously and fully proprietorial. He has brought us through the catastrophe of death, the catastrophe of birth, the catastrophe of marriage. He has taken glossed and threadbare facts, facts which the youngest child knows by names, facts to which time and usage have made us callous. In these facts, exhibited in the life of a young Staffordshire tradesman, Mr. Bennett has again discovered romance. Under the crust he has shown the hard and precious metal of which real life is made. Not by a device of emphasizing Motherhood and The Present

Clayhanger, by Arnold Bennett. Dutton, New York.

System, Little Babies and the Demon Rum has he aroused us fundamentally. He does it by an exposition at once patient and playful. He does it by a consideration in which nothing is shirked, by a method studiously restrained and unexcited. He wins by the sheer valuableness of his tale, by its inclusive understanding, by its integrity.

In The Old Wives' Tale, Mr. Bennett attempted less than in Clayhanger, for in the former he reserved judgment. The book was a triumph, but it was a triumph in which there were still several layers of humanity unmined. He went deep, but not as deep as in Clayhanger. For here he is almost totally occupied with the secret life of Edwin, with that fearful and wonderful labor of personal adjustment of which so little is usually suspected or understood.

There are people who say that human nature is the same the world over, etc. To my mind the great interest in Arnold Bennett's novel Clayhanger is its demonstration that Staffordshire nature has its own rare peculiarities, peculiarities to which this novelist is all the more true because he is proud of them and invincibly sure that they are the best qualities in life. The issues of Clayhanger are indeed issues the world over. They are the issues of life and death. But great novelists all take these issues in their own way, and the way of Arnold Bennett is stubbornly original.

Arnold Bennett is preëminently sane. Sanity is almost his fetish. He is possessed of a taut, intellectual honesty, and a resolute will to reason. I imagine that this is a Bursley specialty. It is not so much a natural, cold-blooded affinity for science as a hatred of nonsense and sentimentality. The

English are almost invariably a people of prejudice: a people of faith, sentiment and romance. But in this son of Staffordshire there is combined with faith, tenderness and romance a hatred of heroics, a hatred of facile emotion, a hatred of insincerity in any form — in short, a love of stern virtue under any other name.

Mr. Bennett knows that we usually lie because we have not courage of our desires and of our pride. We falsify rather than make good. Our laziness and moral cowardice lead to shirking, and our pride leads us into lying. Look how Mr. Roosevelt's fierce pride leads him into constant lying. Mr. Bennett knows this foible, and in Edwin he has selected the usual sensitive man, the good-natured and rather irresolute man of medium vitality, who is born with a strong desire for perfection, and who does not understand how to get forward. This is Edwin's specific weakness, and practically everyone who has desires unfulfilled and pride unratified is in a position to sympathize with Edwin.

Whenever Edwin begins to falsify, Mr. Bennett is present with lambent humor, and he is steadfast in refusing to conventionalize. Certain facts almost always slighted in novels he is ready to catch: he gives due proportion to Edwin's "black and awful agony" at Hilda's first inexplicable letter. And he reaches a fine candor in his description of old Clayhanger's death when he says that: "Edwin's distress was shot through and enlightened by his solemn satisfaction at the fact that destiny had allotted to him, Edwin, an experience of such profound and overwhelming grandeur." It is probably true that another kind of man would not have had so clear a

consciousness of expanded ego. To a man less self-conscious the thought would not occur so readily: "I've had a solemnly satisfying experience." But back of it all is the certain reality that the biggest men want the most consciousness, the most stretching and vivifying experience. Whether the ego is held in that remarkable Staffordshire pride, reserve and protestantism, or merges in sympathies warmer and humbler, the primary egoism of life is the same. That law, known to every candid individualist, receives many exemplifications in this novel of secret, or one might say secretive life.

But is there such a thing to Bennett, the reasonable and apprehensive Bennett, as love? Certainly his metaphysics of love make a rather grudging concession to the poetry of life. "He had no notion that he was in love," he says of Edwin, after Edwin has been piqued by the forthright yet unaccountable and passionate Lessways girl. "He did not know what love was; he had not had sufficient opportunity of learning. Nevertheless the processes of love were at work within him. Silently and magically, by the force of desire and of pride, the refracting glass was being especially ground which would enable, which would compel him, to see an ideal Hilda when he gazed at the real Hilda. He would not see the real Hilda any more unless some cataclysm should shatter the glass." There is no nonsense about affinities or such in this midland view of love. But Mr. Bennett does not fail to see the beauty of the real Hilda. And does he not know, doesn't everyone know, that unless the real Hilda could give Edwin the miracle of more and more life there would be several "cataclysms" a day. Wo-

men have many special and unpleasant jobs to perform, but that their lovers must see an "ideal" when they gaze at the "real," at the risk of a cataclysm, presupposes too elaborately sustained illusion. The love that needs a magic refracting glass is not the fine love of which Bennett speaks in Clayhanger.

And on this point of feeling it may be said that Bennett occasionally has a staggering magnanimity. He can see the eloquence of trite hymns as well as the hideous vulgarity of blood-tub ones. He can see the heroism of mediocre people, missed by Edwin Clayhanger in his cruelty of youth, his blind fastidiousness, his antagonism to natures less refined. He can see, with a special kindling vision, the beauties of a manufacturing town, the epic quality of such vulgar things as a Sunday school centenary or as the solemn moving of a middle-aged printer from the "shop" into his new house. Mocking as he does at all that is histrionic and self-pitying, Mr. Bennett is quite simply and gayly earnest in his celebration of these common happenings. He loves the solidity, the consequence of it all. He feels that there is no "fake" about a net profit of £339 a year in the business of job printing. There may be "victimhood" in Edwin's idealizing of Hilda. There is no victimhood in Edwin's taking £50 from his pocket to pay off the bailiff whom he finds in possession of Hilda's house.

Bennett's refusal to ignore facts does not, however, make his prose prosaic. If you go all the way with Clayhanger you will face many unpleasant social realities. Not merely the cruelties of early factory work in England, the chicane of men in politics and of women in domestic warfare; but also the

rudeness, self-consciousness, irresolution of human beings not skilled in the art of life. But there is nothing dyspeptic or luxurious in Mr. Bennett's attitude toward ugly fact. He is stoically blithe about all these things — not dancing on his Aurelian tightrope, but able to smile containedly.

Mr. Bennett understands everybody. It is rather awe-inspiring to have everybody and everything so explained. And yet he is much more entertaining in manner than any equally serious novelist of my acquaintance. To deal with him all at once is a little like dealing with quite the most competent, decent, understanding yet unsentimental dentist in the world. We are ashamed to show him that we suffer. We heartily approve of his method. If he is superior to our pain, he who understands it so well and has himself been so "porcelained" and "filled" and "extracted," why should we too not be superior to it? He is not a prig. His lack of sentimentality is tonic. But at times there is a certain moral tension in reading this novel. We would not have the tension reduced. We can stand it. But we are rather glad when that excellent Big James comes on the scene, one of the few characters whom Mr. Bennett accepts lovingly for his own sake. Then we realize that Mr. Bennett has very little faculty for engaging the reader's affections in his microcosm. One's deepest emotions, yes. And one's essential admiration. But not the sentiment that in real life we bestow upon people without debating their worthiness. There is possibly more carelessness, more high spirits and effervescence in ordinary life than in this rather tense life of provincial England.

It is not enough, of course, for a novelist to be merely honest, merely philosophic. Beneath his reason there must be something else. Intelligence is wanting unless there is intelligence of the heart. To be merely sane is merely to be in tune with the finite. It is not enough to observe, to enjoy observing, to have marvelous tenacity of memory, lucidity of statement, calm and good-natured catholicity, judicial ease — in a word, supreme sanity. One must also do reverence, firmly and heroically, to the forces within each of us, even the least, that impel us to act without base calculation. In Mr. Bennett calculativeness is fairly deep. There is always a sensitive apprehension and forestallment of anti-climax. He watches for anti-climax out of the corner of his eye. He has no wish to release himself in emotion that may make him ridiculous in the eyes of the critical, and he is scarcely capable of that overwhelming sincerity, that unrestrained and miraculously certain confession of self which marks Tolstoy as so great. Yet it must be asserted that Arnold Bennett is not ultimately pragmatic in the sense that Anthony Trollope was pragmatic. In Bennett there is a suspension of judgment on certain of his people which permits the affections to have sway. There are occasions when reason is transcended and a depth seen in character and in personality which is as illimitable, as satisfying, as the depths of the sky. Before the immutable mysteries, whether of love, of intuition, of sex, of growth and evolution, of decay and dissolution, this reasonable man is reasonable enough to suspend reason. He stands uncovered and unashamed, no longer the ringmaster of bourgeoisie

easy to explain and to ridicule, but the artist who is articulate in a reverence which has no sanction in the ordinary traffic and intercourse of life.

In suggesting Mr. Bennett's " repercussion " from Bursley, to use one of his own words, very little has been said about his plot. But Clayhanger does not, until Edwin adventures to Brighton in search of the widowed Hilda, depend for much of its interest on fortuitous drama. In Edwin's relations with his father and his quiescent sister, Maggie, in his evolution as the friend of the well bred, amusing Orgreaves, there is no definite fictive machination. This does not mean that imagination is lacking. One might as well say that etching is less imaginative than a water color. It means only that Mr. Bennett has attempted the most difficult art of all.

Many readers of Clayhanger will take great pleasure in the author's style. In the beginning especially it is full of beauty, and those pages on the wistful and innocent quality of Edwin as a boy of sixteen are worth reading and re-reading. The scenes between Hilda and Edwin are skillfully handled. Hilda's first letter is a miracle. But the touch in the book that struck me most occurs on page 574, in the talk between Edwin and Hilda. It is one of the most wonderful touches I have ever seen in a novel. It proves the man who did it not only a master of craft but a sheer creator. By the mere art of having a known child tell his full name, he gives us all Hilda's pent-up exquisite passion, a communication from the very soul of one of the most inarticulate creatures in fiction. It is because Hilda is so little explained that this touch, so consistent and yet unexpected, has its rare essence as disclosure.



That is the way life unfolds, but life is usually so much more subtle than fiction.

"The publicans were jubilant and bars sloppy." That kind of acute observation is common in Mr. Bennett, and a delight. In sustained description he is no less clever. He does not surpass anywhere in Clayhanger the account of the execution in The Old Wives' Tale, and occasionally he descends to the Gallic catalogue. But how excellent and fascinating is his description of the beach at Brighton on page 583! People who have not read the book may say: "No doubt it is fascinating, but what good is it to us to be told that there is a fine description on page 583!" Ah, but that is part of a low design on the reviewer's side to provoke the reader into procuring Clayhanger. At all costs. Clayhanger should be read, and by all kinds of readers. It may not be as good as the novel of Hilda Lessways, which is to follow, nor as good as the third novel of the promised trilogy. But it is the best novel Mr. Bennett has yet written, not forgetting his great novel, The Old Wives' Tale.

October 21, 1910.

THESE TWAIN

WHERE Arnold Bennett achieves greatness in his conscientious fiction is in his resolute fidelity to common human beings as they are. In one American novel, The Rise of Silas Lapham, there was a full anticipation of his method and spirit, but it is difficult to find anywhere else another complete example. Greatnesses of a different order, greatnesses which cannot be compared, are to be found in Mr. Bennett's contemporaries, but he above the rest has mastered the art of preserving in fiction the color, the tone, the flavor, the odor, the surface, of provincial urban usualness. Such usualness has been approached in varying moods by numerous English and American novelists. Moore and Gissing have attempted it. Frank Norris and Henry Fuller and Edith Wharton have come at it. It has been part of the problem of every modern bourgeois novel. But no one has succeeded as well as Arnold Bennett in giving it comprehension and proportion. What it is, this routine bourgeois life, most of us know only too well. It is immensely that familiarity which breeds disregard. But so powerful and miraculous is art that as soon as this life is presented to us by one to whom it has appealed, presented with acute and exquisite fidelity, it becomes poignant and beautiful. No matter how the thing in itself may estrange us, no matter how we may despise and rage

These Twain, by Arnold Bennett. Doran, New York.

at its conditions, we are enabled by the artist to come into full understanding of it, and we are grateful to the core of our being for the honesty that retained every tedium, every banality, every inadequacy, for our understanding. To give the sanction of art to the nobility of human nature is precious, but it is no more precious than to bring into the sanction of art the unremitted commonplace. For it proves that there is no such thing as commonplace, that where there is truth there must be beauty.

And in his account of the married life of Edwin Clayhanger and Hilda Lessways Mr. Bennett has adhered to the veracity that implies beauty. No one who read Clayhanger or Hilda Lessways could suppose that the truth of their marriage would be romantic. It is not romantic. It is, in the conventional sense, desperately unromantic and disillusioning. But it is full of an assuaging comprehension and an illimitable tenderness. To be tender over unusualness is possible to almost every imagination. Women who tritely accept tuberculosis in negro tenements can weep with Stevenson over the lepers. Men who are bored to death by the hardships of scrubwomen can blaze with sympathy for a prostitute. Sedentary people of every description are exalted at the thought of war. But it needs genuine imagination to remain responsive in despite of repetition and custom, and this imagination Mr. Bennett possesses. The younger novelists strive as a rule to present situations that are complicated by some piquant irregularity — an illicit lover or two, a brilliant youth horridly addicted to heroin, a millionaire disciple of the I. W. W., and other exciting exhibitions of the orchid in Kansas. But the material

that Mr. Bennett takes is the material of disregarded and unsensational lives, showing by the aid of his devoted imagination the depths in the stuff of which those apparently ordered lives are made.

To those who met Clayhanger and Hilda Lessways before, the task of depicting their union seemed formidable. Hilda Lessways was an inexplicable creature, and in marriage she was bound in some degree to be explicated. The limitations of Edwin, on the other hand, presaged an attitude as husband which could hardly fail to impede that swinging step. And then there was the child. Could Mr. Bennett domesticate Hilda in the Five Towns without losing her magic? Could he sustain without wearying us the patient chronicle of confined and dutiful lives? For some, perhaps, the answer will not be favorable to Mr. Bennett. Admitting, as all must admit, the incomparable resources of his intimacy, the triumphant fertility of his invention, there will be readers to miss in Mrs. Edwin Clayhanger the impetuosity and glamour of the girl whom Edwin loved from afar. These readers will question whether Hilda is the same Hilda. They will believe that somewhere, somehow, Mr. Bennett's divination has faltered. For my own part, I am not sure. The flagrance which permitted Hilda to deviate from Edwin without a word — that flagrance which he was once so falsely represented as accepting entire — seems to disappear into her character unelucidated, and with it some of her salience. She began as mountain torrent. The sweep of her personality in marriage is the sweep of a channeled stream. That a woman of such brilliant and dashing gesture should so subside, that she should attune

herself so readily to a marriage so signally without ultimate confidence, is a great deal to concede. That there should be so few attempts at ultimate confidence is, perhaps, too much to concede, especially as the marriage is rather unwittingly concentrated on the standpoint of the man. But the change seems to me for the most part greatly credible. Hilda's taming, her acquiescence, seems to me very much " like life."

The fact was that she had married him for the look in his eyes. It was a sad look, and beyond that it could not be described. Also, a little, she had married him for his bright untidy hair, and for that short oblique shake of the head which with him meant a greeting or an affirmative. She had not married him for his sentiments nor for his goodness of heart. Some points in him she did not like. He had a tendency to colds, and she hated him whenever he had a cold. She often detested his terrible tidiness, though it was a convenient failing. More and more she herself willfully enjoyed being untidy, as her mother had been untidy. . . . And to think that her mother's untidiness used to annoy her! On the other hand she found pleasure in humoring Edwin's crotchetiness in regard to the details of a meal. She did not like his way of walking, which was ungainly, nor his way of standing, which was infirm. She preferred him to be seated. She could not but regret his irresolution, and his love of ease. However, the look in his eyes was paramount, because she was in love with him. She knew that he was more deeply and helplessly in love with her than she with him, but even she was perhaps tightlier bound than in her pride she thought.

So far from knowing Hilda's mind about himself, Edwin goes through a long and harrowing process of what is euphemistically known as " adjustment." And the complementary process is necessitated for

Hilda not so much on account of her ignorance of Edwin's processes, though that is profound, as on account of the exactions of her contrary will. Judged by some marriages, this conflict may seem unusual. There are persons who inform you that never in their married life have they heard a cross word. But, outside such feastings on angel-cake, sharply and touchingly typical is the Clayhangers' alternation between sacrament and sacrilege. Not by words do the Clayhangers reach comprehension. Hilda is curiously more ready to surrender her body than to surrender her mind. She never foregoes a hard consciousness, "it's each for himself in marriage, after all." But apart from this rather unusual articulation of the warfare that is marriage, she and Edwin represent with extraordinary accuracy the permutations of allied but rival purposes — purposes which can no more be made identical than the weather that favors oats can be made identical with the weather that favors corn.

One thing I miss in Hilda — her sexual consciousness outside marriage. One thing I vainly expected in Edwin — jealousy. Even of the resurrected George Cannon he is not apprehensively jealous, merely fiercely instinctive that Hilda shall not see him. One thing I wondered about — that Hilda and Edwin did not have a child. One thing I disliked — that Hilda "padded" about her bedroom. But that last is the pathos of things as they are.

If Hilda and Edwin were not set in the community of the Five Towns, the provincial England of 1892, the peculiar richness and thickness of their veracity would be infinitely less powerful. But Mr. Bennett



has revived with mastery our sense of that community, and restored it to us in new significance because his perception and his charity are more mature. The death of Auntie Hamps alone appeared to me a lapse in artistic intuition. It was too reminiscent of unforgettable reflections in The Old Wives' Tale.

Whether Hilda proves less liberating than one expected, or Edwin more frustrated, These Twain completes with great success a drama for which many must have trembled. There are things about These Twain that seem fuzzy — the delineation of Tertius Ingpen, for one, and the business capacity of Edwin. But on the whole there is a power and security of characterization that is incontrovertible, and an amplitude of incident so natural and so significant that the sense of life never departs. Whether one regards the amusingly accurate idiom of young George, the picture of Trafalgar Road or of Dartmoor, the flashes of anger or of passion, These Twain is the product of a searching and just susceptibility to the tone and movement of life.

The gratitude that is due to any real artist is great, but the gratitude due to an artist who adheres to life in its common motivation seems to me exceptional. The very sensitiveness that makes a man an artist tends to confine him to those situations which engage and indulge his sensitiveness. Because the world of gross and urgent action, of common necessity, is hostile to the spectator, the spectator easily becomes hostile in return. But Mr. Bennett is a spectator who has retained a beautiful sympathy for motivations and susceptibilities alien to the artistic type. He has transcended interest in "ideas" and pur-



poses to spread human nature before us. It is a triumph of disciplined fictive imagination, a triumph both of artist and man.

December 4, 1915.

GREEN SICKNESS

THERE is a laconic unreasonableness about the ways of creators. It is quite true that the Irish literary revival was beginning to be recognized at precisely the period of Mr. Joyce's novel, and it is also true that his protagonist is a student in Dublin at the hour of the so-called renaissance, a writer and poet and dreamer of dreams. So perverse is life, however, there is scarcely one glimmer in this landscape of the flame which is supposed to have illuminated Dublin between 1890 and 1900. If Stephen Dedalus, the young man portrayed in this novel, had belonged to the Irish revival, it would be much easier for outsiders to "place" him. The essential fact is, he belonged to a more characteristic group which this novel alone has incarnated. One almost despairs of conveying it to the person who has conventionalized his idea of Ireland and modern Irish literature, yet there is a poignant Irish reality to be found in few existing plays and no preëxistent novel, presented here with extraordinary candor and beauty and power.

It is a pleasant assumption of national mythology that the southern Irish are a bright and witty people, effervescent on the sunny side and pugnacious on the other, but quick to act in any event, and frequently charming and carefree and irresponsible. It may be that the Irish exhibit this surface to outsiders and

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, by James Joyce. Huebsch, New York.

afford a case of street angel and house devil on a national scale, or it may be that the English landlord has chosen to see the Irishman as funny in the way the Southern gentleman chooses to see the Negro as funny, but, however the assumption got started, it has been fortified by generations of story-tellers and has provided a fair number of popular writers with a living. It is only when a person with the invincible honesty of James Joyce comes to write of Dubliners as they are, a person who is said to be mordant largely because he isn't mushy, that the discrepancy between the people and the myth is apparent. When one says Dubliners, "as they are," one of course is pronouncing a preference. One is simply insisting that the Irishmen of James Joyce are more nearly like one's own estimate of them than the Irishmen of an amiable fabulist like George Birmingham. But there is the whole of the exquisite Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man to substantiate the assertion that a proud, cold, critical, suspicious, meticulous human being is infinitely more to be expected among educated Catholic Irishmen than the sort of squireen whom Lever once glorified. If this is a new type in Ireland, come into existence with the recent higher education of Catholics, one can only say that it is now by far the most important type to recognize. Bernard Shaw suggested it in the London Irishman, Larry Doyle, who appeared in John Bull's Other Island, but the main character of the present novel is much more subtly inflected and individualized than Larry Doyle, and is only said to belong to a type to intimate that his general mode is characteristic.

Mr. Joyce's power is not shown in any special in-

ventiveness. A reader of novels will see at once that he has never even thought of "plot" in the ordinary sense, or considered the advantage or importance of consulting the preferences of his reader. The thing he writes about is the thing he knows best, himself, himself at boarding school and university, and any radical variation on the actual terms of that piercing knowledge he has declined to attempt. He has sought above everything to reveal those circumstances of his life which had poignancy, and the firmest claim on him to being written was not that a thing should be amenable to his intentions as a sophisticated novelist, but that a thing should have complete personal validity. It did not weigh with him at any moment that certain phrases or certain incidents would be intensely repugnant to some readers. Was the phrase interwoven with experience? Was the incident part of the fabric of life? He asked this searchingly, and asked no more. It is not even likely that he made inquiry why out of all that he could write, he selected particularly to reveal details that seldom find expression. Had he made the inquiry he might well have answered that the mere consciousness of silence is an incitement to expression, that expression is the only vengeance a mortal can take on the restrictions to which he finds himself subject. If others submit to those restrictions it is their own affair. To have the truth one must have a man's revelation of that which was really significant to himself.

Considering that this portrait is concluded before its subject leaves college one may gather that the really significant relations are familial and religious, and that the adjustment is between a critical spirit

and its environment. What gives its intensity to the portrait is the art Mr. Joyce has mastered of communicating the incidents of Stephen's career through the emotions they excited in him. We do not perceive Stephen's father and mother by description. We get them by the ebb and flood of Stephen's feeling, and while there are many passages of singularly lifelike conversation — such, for example, as the wrangle about Parnell that ruined the Christmas dinner or the stale banter that enunciated the father's return to Cork — the viridity is in Stephen's soul. "Stephen watched the three glasses being raised from the counter as his father and his two cronies drank to the memory of their past. An abyss of fortune or of temperament sundered him from them. His mind seemed older than theirs: it shone coldly on their strifes and happiness and regrets like a moon upon a younger earth. No life or youth stirred in him as it had stirred in them. He had known neither the pleasures of companionship with others nor the vigor of rude male health nor filial piety. Nothing stirred within his soul but a cold and cruel and loveless lust. His childhood was dead or lost and with it his soul capable of simple joys and he was drifting amid life like the barren shell of the moon."

It is his mortal sin of masturbation that preys most terribly on this youth, and he suffers all the blasting isolation which is created by the sense of sin in connection with it. Eventually he makes a "retreat" — he is being educated by the Jesuits — and goes to confession and for a time knows religious happiness. The explicitness of this experience is more telling than the veiled account of sexual stupidity in Samuel

Butler's Way of All Flesh, and Mr. Joyce is more successful that Samuel Butler in making religious belief seem real. The efforts of a Jesuit Father to suggest a religious vocation to Stephen are the beginning of the end of his religion. In "lucid, supple, periodic prose" Mr. Joyce describes the transition from devotional life and a private specializing in mortification to the acceptance of nature and the earth. "His soul had arisen from the grave of boyhood, spurning her grave-clothes. Yes! Yes! Yes! He would create proudly out of the freedom and power of his soul, as the great artificer whose name he bore, a living thing, new and soaring and beautiful, impalpable, imperishable." The "Yes! Yes! Yes!" gives that touch of intense youthfulness which haunts the entire book, even though Mr. Joyce can be so superb in flaunting Aristotle and Aquinas.

The last chapter of the portrait gives one the esprit of the Catholic nationalist students in University College. It is a marvelous version of scurrilous, supercilious, callow youth. Mr. Joyce's subject is not in sympathy with the buzzing internationalist any more than with the arcane Irishman whom he compares to Ireland, "a batlike soul waking to the consciousness of itself in darkness and secrecy and loneliness." Stephen walks by himself, disdainful and bitter, in love and not in love, a poet at dawn and a sneerer at sunset, cold exile of "this stinking dunghill of a world."

A novel in which a sensitive, critical young man is completely expressed as he is can scarcely be expected to be pleasant. A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man is not entirely pleasant. But it has such beauty, such love of beauty, such intensity of

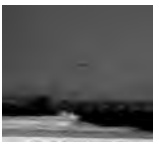
feeling, such pathos, such candor, it goes beyond anything in English that reveals the inevitable malaise of serious youth. Mr. Joyce has a peculiar narrative method, and he would have made things clearer if he had adopted H. G. Wells's scheme of giving a paragraphed section to each episode. As the book is now arranged, it requires some imagination on the part of the reader. The Catholic "retreat" also demands attentiveness, it is reported with such acrimonious zeal. But no one who has any conception of the Russian-like frustrations and pessimisms of the thin-skinned and fine-grained Irishman, from early boarding school onward, can miss the tenacious fidelity of James Joyce. He has made a rare effort to transcend every literary convention as to his race and creed, and he has had high success. Many people will furiously resent his candor, whether about religion or nationalism or sex. But candor is nobility in this instance.

March 3, 1917.



NOVELS AND NOVELISTS, 4





WAR AND PEACE

THERE is a conspiracy among people who have read great books to make the account of them dismally impressive. People urge you to read a masterpiece in the same way that they urge you to join the City Club or subscribe to the Survey. They want to do you good. For years people have told me to read War and Peace. By Tolstoy. "It's stupendous," they've said, "it takes you a month to read it — three large volumes. It has more characters in it than you can possibly remember. It's immense. It is a panorama of the Napoleonic wars, of the invasion of Russia and the retreat from Moscow. It explodes Napoleon. It's the greatest novel ever written."

This to me is the bare and glistening hook. I want bait. There may be voracious natures that crave three-volume panoramic novels. I envy such, but do not seek to emulate them. And I avoid their suggestions.

But this tone is exactly the official tone adopted by Vicomte de Vogüé about War and Peace. It "presents us," he says solemnly, "with a complete tableau of Russian society during the great Napoleonic wars from 1805 to 1815. The stage is immense and the actors are innumerable; among them are three emperors with their ministers, their marshals, and their generals, and a countless ret-

War and Peace, by Leo Tolstoy. Dutton, New York.

inue of minor officers, soldiers, nobles and peasants. We are transported by turns from the salons of St. Petersburg to the camps of war, from Moscow to the country districts. And all these diverse and varied scenes are joined together with a controlling purpose that brings everything into harmony. Each one of the prolonged series of constantly changing tableaux is of remarkable beauty and palpitating with life. The interminable series of incidents, of portraits, of reflections which the author presents to us, unrolls itself around a few fictitious personages; but the true hero of the story is Russia in her desperate struggle against the foreigner, and the real personages, Alexander, Napoleon, Koutouzof, Speransky, occupy almost as prominent a position as the imaginary ones."

The pivot is indeed Russia. That is a grave and genuine observation. But now that I have read War and Peace my heart rebels against the whole tone in which this novel is discussed. Emperors, marshals, ministers, generals! It is not for these that Tolstoy wrote this great, humane, wise, tender book. Somewhere near the middle of it these words about his War occur: "It happened because it was bound to happen; and so it came to pass that some millions of men, ignoring all common sense and human feeling, started to march eastward to slaughter their fellow-creatures, just as, some centuries before, unnumbered swarms had rushed down on the west, killing all in their way." It is of this vast untoward flood of war that Tolstoy was thinking, this torrent in which the men and women of his story are caught, some to ride, some to spin, some to struggle, some to drown. And although he stands for Russia, his country, in the

invasion, no military genius is the hero of his story. There are no heroes, only human beings, giving their impress to events or taking their impress from them; and "the heart of kings is in the hand of God."

The tumult of Austerlitz, Friedland, Borodino, is to be found in War and Peace. Tolstoy has dramatized each battle by focussing it at one point after another, and in one person after another — persons we already know. We stand on the bridge as it is being shelled. We see the army stream by. We charge with young Rostow's squadron across "the gulf of terror." We run with him on foot from the vicious hook-nosed Frenchman, run in fear. With Bolkonsky we rage at the moment of retreat, seize the standard and advance, fall, open eyes on "the deep, far away sky above." With Nicholas we attack without orders, wince at killing and are decorated. With Tonchine we are so insane as not to fall back, we save the day with one battery, and are reprimanded for losing two guns. With Peter we are civilians wandering aimlessly on the battlefield, ending up behind the breastwork where the fighting is thickest. With Bolkonsky again we stand under fire on that fatal day when the French got the range of the reserve.

"'Good God! what has happened? In the stomach? Then he is done for!' said the officers.

"'It actually grazed my ear!' said the aide-de-camp."

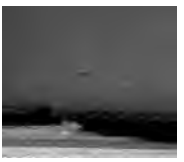
And with Petia, too, the youngster, we spend that last wonderful night on which he listens to his orchestra playing an unknown beautiful hymn.

But it is not this multiplicity of impressions, this



incredible resource and diversity, which stands out as the boon of War and Peace. Other titanic novelists have assembled details with energy and piled up effects only a little less tremendous. Zola could do it, Balzac, Dostoevsky. It is something else which distinguishes War and Peace and gives it its indisputable glory. As one's mind roams back over the thronging events, one is for the moment bewildered. There is no order in them and no end to them. But whether one begins to reflect on Natacha or Bolkonsky or Maria or Peter; whether it is the death of Peter's sire or the dreadful affair between Natacha and Anatole, or Maria's relations with her tyrannical father, or the sad unearthly estrangements of Bolkonsky before he died; whether it is the grand barbaric hunt or the magnificent sleigh-ride or Natacha's ball or Peter's initiation into freemasonry or his duel or his imprisonment and imminent execution — whatever one of these ramified scenes comes to mind, it is instinct with the great spirit of Tolstoy. Like a full and equable light he reveals every inflection and contour. Keen to expose as well as to display, he has for peace as well as war the same heightened faculties, the same depths of sympathy, the same psychological zeal. When he philosophizes fatalistically about war one may decline to follow him. When he passes judgment on Napoleon one may hesitate to accept him. But when he sets afoot any encounter between man and man, or man and woman, or man and nature, he is a master in dramatic intensity, in beauty, in understanding, in that cleanness and firmness and economy of line which comes only with a genius for sincerity.

Natacha is the most vibrant creature in War and



Peace. It is the triumph of Tolstoy's art that she is carried from saucy childhood to maternal amplitude and successfully identified in every process of that change. No torrent that ever ran from high hills to a smooth union with the sea was more perfectly defined in its movements. The same is true of Maria, perhaps, a stream that rises on a plateau, but the person of Natacha is so charming that she arrests one for her own sake. Take her at sixteen, cajoling her mother:

"Come, mamma, do not laugh so; the bed shakes! You are just like me; you laugh as easily as I do. Wait a minute," and taking her mother's hand again she went on with her fortune-telling: "June, July and August — mamma, he is desperately in love; do you not think so? — was any one ever so much in love with you? And he is nice — very nice! Only not quite to my taste; straight and narrow like the tall clock in the dining room. Do you not understand? quite narrow and pale gray. . . ."

"What nonsense!"

"Why don't you understand? Nicholas would understand exactly. Now Besoukhow is blue, dark blue and red; and he makes me think of a square thing. . . ."

"I believe you are flirting with him too . . ." and again the countess could not help laughing.

And then see her with Prince Andrew Bolkonsky. He had kept their marriage waiting, in deference to his father. On the eve of his return she had fallen in love with an adventurer. Bolkonsky never saw her again until he was dying.

"Forgive me," she murmured, looking up. "Forgive me."

"I love you," he said.

"Forgive me."

"What have I to forgive?"

"Forgive me for what I did," said Natacha, in a low voice, and with a painful effort.

"I love you better than I did before," replied Prince Andrew, lifting her head to look in her eyes, which were timidly fixed on his, swimming with tears of joy, but luminous with love and pity. Her pale, thin features, and lips swollen with crying, had, at this moment, no trace of beauty; but Prince Andrew saw nothing but her beautiful eyes radiant through tears.

In one sense it is the story which makes a novel worth reading, meaning by the story the calculated progress of events. There is that famous formula, the good story well told. But it is forlorn to seek in the story all by itself, no matter how thrilling, the explanation of the peculiar joy which is bestowed by a work of art. What a man has to tell is significant. How well he tells it, is also significant. More significant than either is the spirit with which he is endowed. By what sensitive and mysterious process this spirit of the creator steals into a narrative, gives it his livingness, no one has yet defined. But it is this subtle presence, this communication through narrative of a being that has conceived the world afresh, which makes the novel an artistic form. Persons who tell you that War and Peace has for its subject-matter the fate of Russia in the wars a hundred years ago are sticking to an important fact. But there is more in it than their honest reports can tell you. There is a great testimony to life generously and deeply experienced; to mankind's emotions in peace or strife; to the vast variety of human nature that this one man has embraced and transmuted. There is in this miraculous imaginative organism, as in any

other organism, life and the impulse of life. There is something that belongs only to life itself. There is a beauty and a reality indefinable.

September 30, 1916.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

IN the great Russian novels there is a naïve, an extraordinarily fresh personal impression of life. Not only do the Russians conceive specific impressions with the clarity of children, but they have the gift of placing a true value on their emotions. The moment does indeed pass when they stand on the threshold, tremulous and eager, lips parted, cheeks flushed, heart beating high. But whether life leaves them reverent or bitter, deeply humble or sadly ironical, it has given them treasured and ineradicable memories. And not only do the great interpreters of Russian life seem to evaluate their experience according to the dreams and expectations of youth, but they never appear to be drained of their human sympathies. There is no great Russian novel that is not instinct with the brotherhood of man.

In our own novels there is often a sense of the brotherhood of man, but life in the west is provided with so many checks and balances that to be real (that is, to live at first hand) is almost impossible, and human sympathies are insulated by a tame and unemotional religion and insistence on property distinctions, a social externality, and especially by the Anglo-Saxon tendency to compromise and temporize. As a theory the brotherhood of man survives. In practice we find ourselves safer and more comfortable by avoiding the consequences of such a the-

Crime and Punishment, by Fedor Dostoevsky. Dutton, New York.

ory. The result is a fiction which has excellencies of its own, but which, compared with Russian, is cribbed and cabined.

In Crime and Punishment the horizontal partitions of society are pulled out, as well as the vertical, and we observe with Dostoevsky the fate of a man, wretchedly poor, who contemplates, commits and expiates the crime of murder. In writing of Raskolnikov, Dostoevsky has a singularly different manner from Tolstoy. Tolstoy has been called crazy, but there never was a writer who had such a clear, such a reasonable view of people. He delights to show us his hero as he wakes in the morning in bed, and to depict each move as the hero bathes and shaves and puts on one garment after another, and to tell us exactly how much toast and how much coffee he took for breakfast, and how he read the morning paper, and agreed or disagreed with the editorials, one by one. By such details of daily life, familiar to every man and interesting for the most personal reasons, Tolstoy gets our confidence. We know these things to be true. We have felt them and seen them, and we marvel at the insight of this man who interprets us to ourselves. When it comes to the less familiar events, we are already persuaded of Tolstoy's immense good sense and wisdom (which certainly exists) and he has taken the best way to overwhelm us by his conclusions. Nothing at all of this large, paternal, almost omniscient feeling is communicated by Dostoevsky. Dostoevsky does not surround his story with the atmosphere of familiarity and common sense. He does not appear to be saying: This you know. On the contrary, his novel is bathed in sepulchral blackness, and his murderer

moves about the stage in a single intense spot of light. There is no familiarity about the scene, but an exceptional set of circumstances, presented with an uncanny sense of their morbidity. Each definition of Raskolnikov's state of mind insists upon his fever and his monomania. It is actually a clinic — a clinic, however, of such extraordinary realism that it is very nearly insupportable.

It is the convention among Anglo-Saxons to desist when a situation becomes too intense, and to convert the tale of horror into palpable fiction — a game at horror. There is no game about Crime and Punishment. The pool of blood into which Raskolnikov accidentally steps after he has murdered the old money-lender is the most real thing one can conceive. One does not see that blood. But one feels Raskolnikov's ever present sense of it. One feels his terror lest he step in it, or get blood on his clothes. One realizes his chilled frenzy as he washes his hands, and his renewed horror as he discovers that the blood has got on his boots. It is not grewsome exactly. It is simply real. And Raskolnikov's subsequent delirium affects one as a nightmare. To wake him up, to help him remove the traces of blood, to settle the uncertainty of his concealments, is an unceasing impulse. And to have Raskolnikov ill in the novel is worse than having an invalid in the house, he is so much more helpless and incapable of help than a human invalid could be. It is "only a book" of course. But it is a book that obsesses its reader night and day. The crime of Raskolnikov stains one's own conscience. Unbearably does Dostoevsky keep up the suspense and agony, and it is only after passing through the worst vicissitudes of



a guilty criminal that a partial and scrupulously honest relief is granted.

Had Raskolnikov had any moral justification for his crime, or been a defenseless victim of society, this book would have few elements of horror. But Raskolnikov is an "intellectual." His crime is the outcome of a monomania. Although a destitute student, anxious to help the mother and sister he loves, the motives of his crime are utterly insufficient to support it. It is morbidity, diseased intellectualism, which makes the plan possible. And the thing that gives the book its peculiar hold on the imagination is the shocking lucidity of Raskolnikov. If he were remorseful, the centre of one's interests would be his moral fate. But for the first 400 pages one lives with the man in the midst of exterior circumstances. It is agony over his possible detection that is exciting. One watches Raskolnikov in horrible breathless suspense as one might watch a crazy man clamber up the Flatiron building, hand on hand. And where Dostoevsky has surpassed all other masters of horror is in communicating Raskolnikov's own trepidations, as well as the natural dangers of his position. The spot light in which Raskolnikov moves through real and imaginary dangers penetrates his brain. We see him as others see him, and also as he sees himself.

If the interest of Raskolnikov's situation were confined to its dangers, Crime and Punishment would be essentially melodrama. Where Dostoevsky converts it from melodrama is in the sympathy with which he depicts the murderer's environment. There is a curious quality in Dostoevsky's recital. It has at times the fitful, outrageous character of a dream.



But when the situation is brought into focus, and Dostoevsky escapes his Dickens-like tendency to draw grotesques and freaks (increased so much by his dwelling on neurasthenic and hallucinatory factors), he induces the reader to share his exalted sympathy for misfortune and wretchedness. During the period when Raskolnikov is brooding over his plan, he wanders into a filthy saloon, where he is joined by a fatuous drunkard. Into Raskolnikov's ears the drunkard pours all his woes. It is the kind of story almost everyone has heard, but Dostoevsky gives it a new human significance. To his raucous tenement home Raskolnikov accompanies the drunkard, and there he meets the consumptive Catherine Ivanovna, whose blows but increase the humility of the drunken husband. It is not De Morgan's sentimentalism or Tolstoy's religious spirit that pervades this scene, but an understanding at once more caustic and more intimately sympathetic. Catherine Ivanovna is a portrait full of wry humor, and Sonia, from under whose hat appeared "a poor little wan and frightened countenance," is a character beautifully and sublimely conceived. It is she who has taken the yellow ticket at the behest of Catherine Ivanovna, and it is to her that Raskolnikov eventually unburdens his soul. Were the irony, the fantastic humor, of these slums less clearly perceived, the pathos of Sonia could not deeply touch us. But Dostoevsky has no brief for the miserable. And it is characteristic that when he makes Raskolnikov empty his pockets for the drunkard's home he lets it be considered by one a noble impulse, and by another a pathological sympathy, an aberration.

The most moving scene in the book is that in which

Raskolnikov comes for the first time out of the morbid and furtive mood in which he has tortured his mother and sister, and visits Sonia in her squalid room. Here the desire to confess himself is qualified by his abnormal fear that Sonia is mad. At last, however, her heartbroken faith that God will save Catherine Ivanovna leads to his own sincere and bitter outcry: "There may be no God." Here Sonia breaks down. "Several minutes went by whilst he continued his tramp, not noticing her. Suddenly he approached her. His eyes gleamed, his lips trembled, and, resting his two hands on her shoulders, he cast an angry look on this face bathed in tears. In a moment he bent downwards, kissing the girl's feet. She started back frightened, as she would have done from a madman. For Raskolnikov's face this moment was that of one.

"'What are you doing? And to me?' stammered Sonia, growing pale with sorrow-smitten heart.

"Upon this he rose. 'I did not bow to you personally, but to suffering humanity in your person.'"

It is in this scene that Sonia reads to Raskolnikov that passage from the Testament in which faith maketh a man whole. And it is here Sonia declares from her heart the need for a murderer to repent. Long after, when Raskolnikov is on his way to the police to give himself up, he remembers, still hard-hearted, the words of Sonia.

Having got to the centre of the place, the young man suddenly recalled Sonia's words: "Go to some public place, bow to the crowd, kiss the earth you have soiled by your sin, and say in a loud voice, in the presence of everyone: I am a murderer." At the recollection of this he trembled



in every limb. The anguish of the last few days had hardened his heart to such an extent that he felt satisfied to find himself yet open to feelings of another kind, and gave himself entirely up to this one. Sincere sorrow overpowered him, his eyes filled with tears. He knelt in the very middle of the place, bowed earthwards, and joyfully kissed the miry ground. After having risen he knelt down once more.

"There's a fellow who has got a tile loose," observed a lad standing by. This observation was received with shouts and laughter. . . . On seeing himself the object of general attention, Raskolnikov lost his self-possession somewhat, and the words "I have killed," which he had on the tip of his tongue, died away.

Only Dostoevsky could have written this, an irony which, unlike Anatole France's, is not a smile at humanity, but a grave understanding.

The fact that Crime and Punishment has a moral for those animalculæ who are endued only with intellect and will is one of its unexpected disclosures. Not till half the book is read is the Superman idea introduced. But the moral of Crime and Punishment would be nothing if it were not a novel at once fascinating and horrifying. That horror could so fascinate, or fascination be so horrible, is one of the wonders of the written word.

To conclude everything as to Dostoevsky from this one novel would be fatuous, but it is at least possible to recognize a master, one of the few great interpreters of man. On the borderland Dostoevsky stands, the borderland between sanity and insanity, between poverty and crime, between student life and the underworld. There, where men and women flash from one side to the other in the phantasmagoria of passion and necessity, Dostoevsky

watches with intensity and yet with consummate patience. He has no illusions and no useless pity. He attempts no easy pathos. The Crime, at which so many sympathies halt and hearts begin to harden, Dostoevsky accepts without protest. It is the Punishment that awakens his soul, and as the flame of the inner life rises and falls one can feel the heart of Dostoevsky beat quicker, believing as he does in the forces that heal as well as wound.

June 30, 1911.





DRAMA AND THE THEATRE, 1



JOHN SYNGE

THE monosyllable Synge will convey little to many American readers. In Dublin, where the dramatist died last March, the name is known to every one. In London, where his plays were acted frequently, it is known at least to the cultivated minority. In Paris, where Synge invited his soul on the slopes where so many lose their souls, perhaps a few do know his name to-day. It was uttered, however strangely, in Prague, where one of his shorter plays was given. On Inishmaan and Aranmor, the islets that are separated from Connemara by racing seas, the fishermen will still think of the man they called John, who now lies in his black coffin, never to talk to them again in that low rapid voice of his, or laugh through his closed teeth, or watch in his silent way with fine steady gaze as they went on with their manly work, or spoke to him of things he loved to hear, their wills and their desires, and their colored dreams.

Synge was not 38 when he died. Up to 1903 he was unknown as a writer except by his friend Yeats. In that year his first play was acted in Dublin, and he had definitely left Paris, where Yeats had met him and drawn him to thinking of the Gaelic he had forgotten, and the Irish imagination he was starving. Yeats served letters the day he turned Synge west.

Poems and Translations, by John Synge. Luce, Boston.

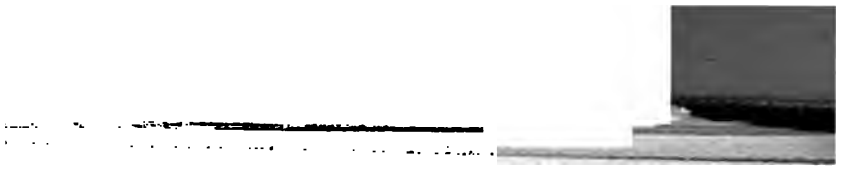


It makes one wince to think of the other genius that has kept astray — in baffling forests of life, where the branches conceal the stars.

Not a few things will work against the proper understanding of Synge here in America. In the first place his dramas are not published in America. Next he wrote solely of the Irish people. Again his English is as strange as it is beautiful. Again he has been blasphemed by stupid patriots, and by priests who know not beauty and pervert truth. Finally, a little clique is likely to appropriate him, to refer to him darkly and ecstatically, and to make of him a god for their jealous devotion.

In spite of these things, I believe that Synge's fame will spread wherever English is spoken. Men going on long journeys will slip into their satchel a book of Synge's that, loving, they cannot relinquish. I believe that Ireland, which spat upon Synge while he lived, will exalt him at last as she has exalted others who loved her without being able to sentimentalize. And I am sure also that his five dramas will come to be more and more familiar in the theatre, as more and more there are managers who value their audiences, and audiences who value themselves.

While glancing at the poems and translations by Synge, his dramas may be recalled. The common lingo of book reviewing is not worthy of these joyous and salty plays. We are accustomed to unmeasured praise of the Elizabethans. Well, here in our own time is a man who writes English as fresh, as unruly, as gorgeously rhetorical, as fiercely dramatic, as the miraculous English of the renaissance. Leaf came before bloom, no doubt. There



is gray as well as cardinal red in the five dramas of Synge. But to recede from his work and look back upon it is to behold a blaze of color, prose that stands out first in separate sharp patches, like an impressionist masterpiece, and then composes, composes discreetly, into hues not all brilliant, but tender and vague and mournful, the mist creeping over the hills and the dusk drooping on the sea.

If one has an impression of color in thinking of The Playboy, The Shadow of the Glen, The Tinker's Wedding, The Well of the Saints, it is because a primal delight is in them all, a delight of image, of figure, of poetry. Sounds — the sound of a woman's low voice, the cry of the heron, the roaring of the rain — might as well be in one's mind, or touch — waves of warmth from the earth in spring, the soft air of evening or the kiss of a sweet mouth. Whatever the impression Synge leaves, it is beautifully sensuous, not merely in the romantic vision he summons, but more contagiously in his rhythms, his joyous or plaintive evocation.

Mr. Yeats speaks of the " astringent joy and hardness that was in all he did," and again of his " hunger for harsh facts, for ugly surprising things, for all that defies our hope." And he thinks of that little poem in which Synge, after looking at one of A. E.'s pictures, The Passing of the Shee, was " repelled by the contemplation of a beauty too far from life to appease his mood ":

> Adieu, sweet Angus, Maeve and Fand,
> Ye plumed yet skinny Shee,
> That poets played with hand in hand
> To learn their ecstasy.



We'll stretch in Red Dan Sally's ditch,
And drink in Tubber fair,
Or poach with Red Dan Philly's bitch
The badger or the hare.

Synge did, indeed, find little reality for himself in the dim goddesses of Yeats, les belles dames sans merci. Like Yeats, he felt the wrong of unsightly things, and, like Yeats, he hated the timid, the banal and the sordid life of our modern bourgeoisie. But Synge's passionate desire was for poetry in the life about him, poetry that he could feel and hear and see. Not by a seclusion and exaltation of his nature could he be satisfied, but by the energetic discharge of his thought, the expression of his exuberant fantasy, the reaction in drama of all the emotions which flourish in man, never to be admonished by the moralist in view, but to be proportioned by irony, by satire, by the ringing laughter of Rabelais.

In the preface to The Playboy, speaking of reality, "which is the root of all poetry," Synge made this significant criticism:

In the modern literature of towns, however, richness is found only in sonnets, or prose poems, or in one or two elaborate books that are far away from the profound and common interests of life. One has, on one side, Mallarmé and Huysmans producing this literature; and, on the other, Ibsen and Zola dealing with the reality of life in joyless and pallid words. On the stage one must have reality, and must have joy; and that is why the intellectual modern drama has failed, and people have grown sick of the false joy of the musical comedy that has been given them in place of the rich joy found only in what is superb and wild in reality.



Now, while Synge believed that "there is no one timber that has not strong roots among the clay and worms," this does not seem to me to imply that he hungered for harsh facts. Ibsen and Zola, whose words were surely not pallid, did hunger for harsh facts with the hunger that drove other men to locusts and wild honey. But Synge was a romantic. He believed in "what is superb and wild in reality." Being at the opposite pole to the fat and rosy Irishman of the Thomas Moore order, he could not include anything in his romance that did not suffer his brooding imagination and his personal experience. When he sang of queens, of Etain, Helen, Maeve and Fand, "Queens of Sheba, Meath and Connaught," it was to turn to the woman he loved, saying:

> "Yet these are rotten — I ask their pardon
> And we've the sun on rock or garden,
> These are rotten, so you're the queen
> Of all are living, or have been."

Is this mordant? On the contrary, it is fiercely vigorous and healthy. Synge knew the irony of fate, the falsity of dreams, the vanity of vanities. Yet this knowledge disgusted him not with life, but with the curmudgeons of life; and he took his joy not in belaboring fate or annulling dreams, but in observing with frank delight or frank stoicism the dance of life, merry, grotesque or mournful, according to the music of circumstance.

Synge said once that the drama, like the symphony, does not teach or prove anything. And contemning the plays that have one sort of propaganda or another, he spoke joyously of the best plays of Ben



Jonson and Molière, that "can no more go out of fashion than the blackberries on the hedges." Being so little anxious to prescribe for the revolution in the soul of man, Synge is in danger of being underestimated by people who expect drama to be a "criticism of life," and want to leave the theatre saying: "And the moral of that is . . ." He takes no account of such shocking morality, such prurient idealism.

Yet I do not feel that there is anything unreal, or unconcerned about the women and men in Synge's plays. In their lives, as in yours and mine, there are hard material conditions, and if they were wise with the wisdom of this "age of reasons and purposes" they would give us pointers on the conservation of national resources, the municipalization of street railways, the sterilization of habitual criminals. But Synge has found little of wild and superb reality in these estimable topics. Instead, he writes a little play like The Shadow of the Glen that has not an opinion in it, nor a purpose in it, nothing but the emotions of everyday living, the thoughts of a woman on growing old, the gray lonesome thoughts of a fine woman married to a wheezy old man, the angry and painful thoughts of the old man, the words of a callow lover who thinks he owns the woman, the words of a tramp who paints for her, in words that sing with the beauty and illusion of freedom, the "grand evening" of the happy wanderer, and the fine songs she'll be hearing when the sun goes up.

You may read that play twenty times, and you will find that it wears like gold. It is a marvelous play, with fierce humor, gallantry of image, pungent real-



ism. Here is the wild and superb reality of our common nature, with nothing to show it off in the lonely farmer's cottage at the head of a long glen, where all one sees are "the mists rolling down the bog, and the mists again, and they rolling up the bog."

The Playboy of the Western World is a play so unexpected in action, so racy in idiom, so perplexing in its first paradox of the murderer honored and respected, so satisfying in its final revelation of laughable, vain, miserable, heroic human nature, that to discuss it in a cursory manner is neither tempting nor fitting.

It is a play in which Mr. Yeats sees the general characteristics of all Synge's plays, wherein person after person is "the like of the little children do be listening to the stories of an old woman, and do be after dreaming in the dark night it is in grand houses of gold they are, with speckled horses to ride, and do be waking again in a short while and they destroyed with the cold, and the thatch dripping, maybe, and the starved ass braying in the yard." This is the truth of all of them, and yet Synge did not send his planet through space to the tune of the braying ass.

Riders to the Sea is tragedy, bitter, sorrowful, resigned, dignified. The Well of the Saints is cacophonous, perhaps, but The Tinker's Wedding is splendid fun, a beautifully veracious version of the Irish tinkers, a grand tribe of characters, full of ribald gayety and blasphemy, superstitious, irregular and verging on the criminal, no respecters of persons, their own least of all. To enjoy them, as they plot and lie and squabble, may seem fearfully aban-

doned, but whatever prevents one enjoying The Tinker's Wedding is essentially evil.

The romance which Synge found in life, however, is best expressed in the endings of The Playboy and of The Shadow in the Glen, endings on the upward wing, with certainly a swoop downward, but with a hope of love and of power that are proof of the invincible Gael.

How invincible was Synge personally is to be learned in this last book, Poems and Translations, a handful of verse and prose which Mr. Yeats has prefaced with a touching comment on the man and his work. Synge knew he had been dying for months, but he spoke to no one except his betrothed. "He was a solitary, undemonstrative man, never asking pity, nor complaining, nor seeking sympathy, but in this Book's momentary cries; all folded up in his brooding intellect, knowing nothing of new books and newspapers, reading the great masters alone."

How well Synge realized himself, this book is final proof. The man gave nothing that was not himself, either in the things he spoke of or the way he spoke of them. He had technique, excellently applied, but his one purpose was to further the expression of that keen, critical, ironical, humorous and impossibly romantic creature who hated shams, hated compromises, but loved reality whether it came in vagrants or tinkers, in a lonely farmer woman in the hills, or a fine girl in a Mayo shebeen.

In his translations of Petrarch Synge has performed the miracle. His own poems have no more vitality than these heart-breaking poems rendered in the prose of an Irish countryman.

Whatever the desolate woman or man may miss of humanity in the other Irish writings of to-day, there is in Synge unending humanity. The idiom is foreign to most. The imagery leaps and startles like flame. But the deep spirit of a man has gone into this work, and those who read with the spirit will know it.

July 2, 1909.

SHAW ON MARRIAGE

THE last person in the world to take Getting Married seriously as a drama would be Bernard Shaw himself. He knows that his name at last arouses joyous expectation in a large American public, and he is probably human enough to be gratified that Getting Married has had an excellent New York run. But there can be few of his achievements in the theatre about which he has smaller illusion than this same manipulation of dialectic. In other plays he has been really interested in the people he created. He has given them some chance to have an accent of their own, and to behave spontaneously. Here, except for Mrs. George and perhaps the bishop, he shows little interest in his characters as persons. They are mouthpieces, and subservient mouthpieces at that. They have one excuse for appearing in the "action" and one function when they are present on the stage, to spout about marriage. They have no other reason for being. If the events of the play provided such enormous pressure that one's attention could not wander from marriage any more than one's attention at Ghosts can wander from heredity, Getting Married could be regarded as a drama. But the only solid compulsion in the play is the compulsion worked by the inclusively argumentative author. Mr. Shaw was never so little occupied in suggesting a specific dilemma that depended on idiosyncrasy, or

so much occupied in discussing an institution. To engage people's minds by the sheer vivacity of his discussion seemed to him the thing worth doing. And he made no serious effort to do anything else.

The trouble with a play so disputatious is the trouble with all purposeful documents. It is the purpose that is fascinating, and there is no fun in the processes once the purpose is accomplished. So long as one has the purblind conventions that Mr. Shaw seeks to undermine in Getting Married, there is considerable excitement in the scheme and plot of his proposals. Then it is really thrilling that a woman like Lesbia can want children without wanting a husband, that a woman like Leo can want a lover without wanting to give up a husband, that a woman like Edith can want a husband without wanting to give up free speech. But once these impulses have been accepted beforehand and one's mind has dwelt on them, the flinty opposition on which Mr. Shaw must count for his steely spark is absent, and there is little in the drama except the equation of the personalities involved. Of course one may say that it is the vitality of Mr. Shaw's ideas, not their novelty, that justifies Getting Married, and that so long as such prejudices as the ones he is encountering are viable, his exposure of them is bound to have verve. That assumes he really has exposed prejudices, not tried to titillate his audience with a facile perception of them. For myself, he'd have to reveal a much stronger feeling about the whole business of institutionalized sex than Getting Married exhibits to make his witticism about marriage do more than seem rather mildly tickling. In 1908, perhaps, the public skin was thinner and his point



sharper. That is the unfortunate part of his long indulgence as the spoiled Irish tag-player among bumbling Philistines.

It is perfectly all right for Mr. Shaw to have his characters "talking all over the shop," but either the quality of their talk ought to be better or it ought to be representative of persons in a plight more related to love. The plight of Cecil and Edith is, of course, a facetious one. On their wedding morning they start reading pamphlets — he on a man's legal liability for his wife and she on the laws of divorce. It is amusing, but it requires an enormous spirit to carry it off, and there is nothing in the bishop's daughter or the young man who plans to marry her to make their feelings or reasonings particularly poignant. It is, however, the twists to the discussion that remind one of Mr. Shaw's amazing capacity for groundling wit. "This is not quarrelling, Lesbia; it is only English family life." "Go and get married first: you'll have plenty of arguing afterwards, miss, believe me." "Lord bless you, ma'am, I'm that fond of old Matilda that I never tell her anything at all for fear of hurting her feelings." These are the kind of mediæval, even arboreal, jests that one gets a little tired of. And one needs a real conviction as to sincere characterization before one can enjoy the young lady who keeps asking: "Have you worn your liver pad?" "Have you rubbed your head with the lotion every night?"

As a shameless playwright, Mr. Shaw knows that these lines are laugh-getters, and he knows it is expedient to pick up laughs. That is not in itself a monstrosity, but a play has to be extremely witty to

redeem such witticism. For all its exhibition of conventional inconsistency and pretense and mindlessness, Getting Married is hardly the play.

Mrs. George is a thrilling person. "Her beauty is wrecked, like an ageless landscape ravaged by long and fierce war. Her eyes are alive, arresting and haunting; and there is still a turn of delicate beauty and pride in her indomitable chin; but her cheeks are wasted and lined, her mouth writhen and piteous. The whole face is a battlefield of the passions, quite deplorable until she speaks, when an alert sense of fun rejuvenates her in a moment, and makes her company irresistible." A play that lived up to Mrs. George, and kept the discussion of marriage in the hands of persons worth considering, would have had greatness. As it is, Mrs. George provides a moment of greatness in her intranced speech. Mr. Shaw is not a poet. His rhetoric is always the rhetoric of noble intention rather than inspiration. It is built, not born. But there is beauty and valor in every line of that rhapsodic utterance — "When you loved me I gave you the whole sun and stars to play with. I gave you eternity in a single moment, strength of the mountains in one clasp of your arms, and the volume of all the seas in one impulse of your souls. A moment only; but was it not enough?" If Mr. Shaw rises by climbing, he never rose to a greater height.

On this summit Getting Married does not stand. Mr. Faversham and Mr. Cherry and, in some ways, Miss Crossman, did better by their author than any playgoer was likely to expect. But the total result was decidedly short of happiness. What is happiness to a propagandist like Mr. Shaw? He ex-



pressly disavows happiness as a decent human consideration in that magnificent preface to Getting Married which says so much more than the play. He may be right about matrimonial happiness, but about theatrical he is dangerously wrong, and playgoers can fairly blame him for not having deepened his characters or heightened his wit.

February 17, 1917.



TIME CANNOT WITHER?

A MAN so virtuous as Bernard Shaw is entitled to one incontinence, but the lifelong habit of debating societies has finally gone to his head. In Getting Married there were parentheses and divergences and footnotes — that play was as chaste as the Parthenon compared with the diffuse Misalliance. It appeared sufficiently long, Misalliance, when one read it. The Faversham production at the Broadhurst Theatre shows how much the eye is quicker than the ear. It is a powerful long performance to sit through, and during it Mr. Shaw shrinks several sizes in the estimate of normally patient men.

It is an amusing production. Mr. Maclyn Arbuckle in particular raises a gale of refreshing laughter as soon as he enters, and his performance as the great Tarleton of Tarleton's Underwear goes far to make the evening hilarious. But subtract Mr. Arbuckle, fix attention on the wily and nefarious dramatist behind him, and one soon realizes how much one is being nourished on wind. The play is shamelessly self-indulgent, an orgy on the part of a man who neither drinks, smokes nor chews. Better for us if Bernard Shaw were as wild as the Yellow Book wanted to be, and kept for his own laxities in Misalliance the eye that he actually had for vaccinators and eaters of shrimps and prawns.

It is all very well to urge that discursiveness is quite possible under the guise of drama, and that



the mind may be engaged and satisfied by the lively development of pregnant ideas. Something else is bound to be expected, if the situation that starts the discussion is an emotional situation and the participants in it look like actual men and women. For the convenience of the insuppressibly argumentative, it is necessary to suppose that every one has a special line of conduct and is perfectly aware of it and is enormously articulate about it and is engaged in discussing it a large part of the day. This assumption, so suitable for the ventilation of ideas, is hopelessly incompatible with the state of mind that a dramatic situation actually begets in the man at a play. What one demands in a play, knowingly or unknowingly, is the conviction that the situation is genuine to its participants, and if the situation is genuine one expects a chemistry of mood and circumstance that has an emotional outcome, satisfying the mind that has been engaged by the issue but also satisfying the heart that, in genuine drama, is the partner of mind. Misalliance is unfortunately farcical in its contempt of such obligations. It makes every one in the play an exponent of a cause rather than an element in a vital chemistry, and what is developed is not a drama but a series of arguments, a display of ideas rather than a display of their signification.

What could be more superficially comic than the juxtaposition of fastidious Summerhays and the irreverent Hypatia? Or the linking of romantic old Tarleton and the pragmatic Lina Szczepanowska? Or the contrast of young Summerhays, a male who keeps his end up by crying and screaming, and Lina, a female who possesses the sort of physical courage that is supposed to go with comb and spurs? But



the fertile invention of Bernard Shaw is not taxed to arouse anything but this easy amusement at his combinations and collisions and contrasts. No emotion in the farce, not that of Tarleton senior or Tarleton junior for Lina, or that of Summerhays senior or Summerhays junior for Hypatia, or that of Hypatia for Percival or Percival for Hypatia, has any employment except to promote amusing comment. And the greatest ardor of all, the ardor of Gunner to murder John Tarleton, is grasped as a supreme chance to turn a laugh.

If the ideas of Misalliance were fresh, one might be content to assume that drama as one long opportunity for opinion. The staleness, the pleasant and friendly staleness, of much of its material, is enough to exclude that possibility. Percival's willingness to bully the clerk as a matter of honor is a happy touch of satire in an excellent scene. Mrs. Tarleton's practical attitude toward her husband's polygamy and her diverting notions of the aristocracy are new elements in that humane maternalism to which the dramatist is so well disposed. But Hypatia's assault on Percival, Johnny Broadbent Tarleton's literalness, the physical cowardice of Summerhays, all suggest that Misalliance was made from chips that littered the dramatist's workshop. And this lack of novelty fixes attention on the perfunctory nature of the drama, especially on the sacrifice of its development to the immediate theatre-laugh.

It is a theatre-laugh, for example, that Gunner earns. The seduction of his mother may or may not have been a joke, but Mr. Shaw plants the poor idiot so that he is merely ludicrous, regardless of his mother's death and everything else. So it is a thea-



tre-laugh, not a laugh of corrective comedy, that attends every suggestion of love in Misalliance. A man in love is no more laughable, really, than a man in a gas-mask. His appearance may be silly, but the question is, what is creating the appearance? To laugh at the grotesque intensity of him is to behave like a child. Yet Mr. Shaw continues to parody the appearances of love and to make them the material of his farce.

It is a little hard on Shaw to blame him for such relaxed behavior. No one has become so serenely at home with the theatre public or is allowed to saunter with such informality among idols. He may sit on the floor where other people sit on chairs, may enter souls without knocking and leave without leave-taking, and each touch of his familiar unusualness is happily anticipated and recognized. There is a certain responsibility on his side, indeed, to meet these expectations of his public. He would be painfully disappointing if his characters did not jump through paper rings or hang their hats on the intellectual gas. But while the luxury of prattle is eagerly permitted to him by scores and hundreds of auditors, including every English-speaking critic, it is absurd not to regret that he is luxuriating, taking his ease in disporting rather than exercising his gifts. While the struggle was on, he tried harder. Now that it is won, he has dropped the discipline of self-criticism and lets his quick-silver mind run loose. The penalty is not apparent. He fills theatres as he never filled them in his heyday. His audiences know when to laugh, if not when to think. But there is a penalty in the end.

In the mossy corners of America, where pride is

synonymous with tradition and heads are moulded to fit the metal of inheritance, the name of Shaw is still distasteful and a little alarming. A charlatan, he is still called, a mountebank, a jackanapes, but the substance of his offense to the ancien régime of Brooklyn and Hartford and Orange and Boston is what they regard as his smart irreverence. And wherever there is the habit of reverence and the creed of authority, as to property or family or love or seniority or government or taboo, the tone of Shaw has earned a persisting resentment. To give comfort to such people by dispraising a great man would be lamentable, but the dispraise is chiefly because he is becoming less deadly to the enemy. It is his season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, and in this autumnal drama there is less fruitfulness than mist.

October 6, 1917.



THE GOLDEN AGE

AS a general rule one does not ask how a new play reveals a personality. One goes further back and asks with considerable heat whether it has any personality to reveal. That, fortunately, is the kind of skepticism one can drop in dealing with J. M. Barrie. One can revel in his positive acclimatization as a dramatist. He is not a man so unversed in the language of the theatre that he is driven to hackneyed situations and conventions and platitudes. The play is his suitable, mastered medium. He does not work at it, but in it. He is no more hampered by the theatre than Caruso or William Jennings Bryan by their singing voice.

Because he has such idiosyncrasy as a dramatist, has so managed to effectuate his qualities, the good knight James dissuades a fair number of people. They do not believe in fairies, thank you. They do not like him. He gets over to them only too well. A good deal of this comes into the criticism of A Kiss for Cinderella, especially in its Miss Maude Adams version. It fails not because it is A Kiss for Cinderella, but because it is Barrie, too much Barrie, for a quite reputable kind of taste. There are others who like Barrie but think he is not at his best in this creation. It is thin, they feel, hasn't the gimp the earlier plays had, hasn't the earlier spice and ginger. They see, or profess to see, a real falling-off.

Dramatists do fall off, of course. Pygmalion limped for Shaw, and Percy Mackaye has pecked at a fence or two. Henry Arthur Jones has moved steadily down. But one has to be suspicious of the oracular cuss who takes a dramatist's pulse and always shakes his head. He may be discovering a regular condition, not a crisis. He may have forgotten his patient's constitutional alienation from norm. Personally I do not think this "fancy" of Barrie's is as happy as Peter Pan, which I pretended to love but never returned to. I do not think, for one thing, that it has the same degree of inspiration, the same airy independence of fact. The first act of Cinderella, for example, is like the preliminary clucking of an aëroplane before it even trills along the ground to start flying. It is vibration without compensatory motion. It is just a little dull. But when Cinderella does get started it becomes Barrie, Barrie in what the newspapers call his "whimsy," Barrie in his essential infantility of attitude. And the last act, after the prepotent "fancy," has its familiar sickabed-lady lyricism. If Barrie isn't like that, what is he like?

Your attitude toward this man's genius depends altogether, I should imagine, on your general attitude toward heaven. If you believe in heaven, the peculiar kind of child's heaven that is Barrie's, you find it easy to lend yourself to him, to his general wistfulness and shy sensibility and hazel-twig gift for nostalgia. You find it easy, in this particular instance, to follow Miss Thing in wartime London, the naïve Scottish maid in the studio by day, being cute about Venus de Milo and pathetic in the eyes of her employer; and finding pathos at night herself



in services for the poor who visit her shop, and in services for the children who perch in packing-cases all about her. As tailor and doctor and barber Miss Thing earns her pennies, a symbol to London of the exigencies of her wartime, and she spends her pennies caring for the refugees (one of them a Gretchen, God bless Cinderella's 'eart). It is to please the children that Miss Thing plays Cinderella, plays it out in the street waiting for her Prince, as she confides to the policeman; and gets pneumonia and her Dream, and recovers to have the policeman speak poetry without knowing it and make the dream come true.

Although it is with humor that Barrie sees his policeman, humor as to his pompous idiom and his romance so pawkily enjoyed by Cinderella, the full humor of the play is in the fairy dream. Miss Thing sees herself arriving late at the ball, of course, and triumphantly chosen by her prince-policeman over the beautiful Carmencitas and Mona Lisas reminiscent of the studio. She also sees a lovely Maxfield Parrish background for King and Queen and Lord Times and the lord mayor. But the Barrie touch is the Cockney tone of the court that Miss Thing is projecting, a cuteness with laughter in it at every turn. The music is as Cockney as the lingo. It is a glorification of hurdy-gurdy and gives the ball a hilarity that would be coster hilarity if Miss Adams could unbend as miraculously as she strops a razor. This humor saves Barrie's tenderness from the extremities to which it leans.

On those extremities depend, however, the legitimacy of J. M. Barrie's inspiration. For the tenderness that suffuses him is the tenderness of a spe-



cial romance to which Anglo-Saxons as a rule are early inured. Few grown persons of my own acquaintance take any great stock in heaven, but when they were little all of them believed in it, not because they were told to so much as because they were able. They found life different from their childish dream. In childhood, in other words, one might still believe in heaven because one still might take experience in a wondrous heavenly way. One woke early on a Christmas morning to a world where there were no chores or chidings at the moment, where there were to be many surprises, but all of them pleasant, where the promise was to have a swift and merry performance, where one could count on a warm fire in the breakfast-room and a warm glow in the parental heart. Those were golden mornings, mornings of a world unified and indescribably benign, and one revelled in the expectancies they realized. It was before one began to emphasize the shattering question, Why don't the wheels go round?

In convalescence in later life, to cite a common experience, there can be a similar unity. At such a time, particularly if one have an attractive nurse, the universe comes into tune. Lying in the sanctified irresponsibility of the sick-bed, flowers to the right of us, flowers to the left of us, all the creases seem gradually to smooth out. Serene in emancipation, one falls into sweet, mild, radiant moods, with little rills of ecstasy, as of lake water crisping on a sunny, silent beach. In those moods one pronounces one's own absolution, thinks well of one's former employers, regrets every unanswered letter, makes mellifluous speeches to absent camerados and cameradas, and generally carries on. The clash of life seems



nonsense. The game becomes as amicable as solitaire. And, if one is able to stand the gaff, one thinks back to paradise, flowers to the right and to the left rather more than in the sick-room, and an infinitely more sanctified irresponsibility, a more divine suspension of hapless cause and gritty effect.

The belief in this sort of heavenliness is perhaps the richest daydream in the American and Anglo-Saxon world. It is the escape from life which people seek in fiction which J. M. Barrie spontaneously supplies. If his middle age has sapped a little of his inventiveness, he is no less a romanticist. He still believes in fairy godmothers and would like to wave his own wand over an errant world.

January 6, 1917.



BARRIE'S PLAYLETS

DRAMAS that capitalize the charm of nursing the wounded, the romance of waving a flag, the sadness of lovers leaving for the front — these have a right to be mentioned by virtue of being so thoroughly offensive. There was something horrid about even Bernhardt wearing a bloody shirt and dying pro patria at the end of a loud recitation. The war is like radium in its intensity as a theatrical subject. Misused, it is doubly like radium in doing atrocious harm. For these reasons, reasons pregnant with recollection for New York playgoers this season, one hates to confess that J. M. Barrie's new playlets are mainly about the war.

The signal fact, however, is that Barrie has written The New Word and The Old Lady Shows Her Medals with a decency that is utterly impossible to the second-hand and third-hand playwrights, who merely appeal from their own vulgar preconceptions to the vulgar preconceptions of their audience. The war about which Barrie is writing is not a sentimentality derived from daydreams of prowess, Kipling fantasy, school yarns of knighthood, pleasant fancies of endless effort and cheery self-sacrifice without a single hint of flagging energy, depression, poisonous fatigue. Slick and smug as the outsiders make war, Barrie has forgotten all that he ever dreamed of unreal heroisms and has aimed to give back through art the wartime London in which he is im-



mersed. Tender, whimsical and sensitive he remains, with all his old conviction that human beings are ever groping for each other through a fog of inarticulateness, but the unity that the war has given to his England has put him in sober possession of his own people in London, and he writes of them with a sense of the meaning war has for ordinary people such as the American pot-boiling playwrights have entirely missed.

Quite often at Barrie plays I find myself unpersuaded by the author. I resent having him suggest how misunderstood I am, and how forlornly sympathetic, and how I keep lighting a signal in the window of my heart for a lover who never, never comes. If such preoccupations existed, I'd be for curing them, and not so much for nursing them into a solitude romance. But in the two war playlets there is such humor mingled with the recognition and indulgence of sensibility, and such excuse for it under the circumstances, that only a man with a heart of leather could fail to respond. The Barrie mood has not greatly altered, but the theme is perfect for it, and so delicately accommodated to the beloved familiarities of Barrie's nature that a finer result could scarcely be supposed.

The first one-act play, The New Word, did not seem so well performed as The Old Lady Shows Her Medals, and for my own part I remember The Old Lady with deeper satisfaction. As a searching account of the human animal, however, The New Word is incomparable. A middle-aged, middle-class Englishman is left alone with his young son, who is in his uniform as lieutenant and next day is to depart for France. The father is proud of his

boy and the boy loves his father, but neither of them has ever overcome the embarrassment of close kinship, and Barrie exhibits them in all the awkwardness of their emotional illiteracy. For a really civilized person, perhaps, this playlet would have little or nothing to say. It would mean no more to such a rare person than the periodic grunts of visiting Indians mean to us, or the immeasurable silences of babies inspecting one the other. But far as we may have progressed beyond the mute Indian or the mute baby, most of us are aware of relationships that ache inside us like life awaiting birth. There is a peculiar estrangement that is bred by the very similarity of temperament between father and son, and an affinity that makes expression seem indecent. This is so gently, so humorously, suggested in The New Word, that the mawkishness of meaningful theatrical handclasps is avoided. Father and son do come near to each other, but Barrie is satisfied to leave them British to the end. Had he made them more articulate it might have been more admirable, but it would have destroyed their realness. To the last embarrassed cough of Mr. Trevor the father is real.

A chorus of London charwomen gave the second war playlet its body of flavor. However little the war may be theirs in point of advantageousness, it is indubitably theirs by association and sentiment and preoccupation, and Barrie shows how the tentacles of maternal emotion have fastened about the riddled hulk of Europe without regard to anything but the personal and regimental adventure to which these women give their sons. It is enough for those women that their sons are at the front to become parties themselves to the pomp and circumstance of



war, and just this home proprietorship in the task of the empire excites a lonely charwoman, "Mrs." Dowey, to wish herself the mother of a soldier. She becomes adopted in that capacity after harsh resistance by a singularly outspoken, uncompromising and breezy Scotchman. The first interview between the demure though pertinacious Mrs. Dowey and the angry male who has fallen into her clutches is exceedingly racy and yet touching, and the maneuvring of the gigantic Black Watch soldier by the small body that wants to mother him is all the more amusing because it is so clearly recognized by both woman and man. Wonderfully acted by Miss Beryl Mercer and Mr. John M. McFarlane. If Barrie had been sentimental in this playlet, if he had made the man talk to slow music about the trenches, it would have been an unbearable nuisance. It is exquisitely enough that the man should say in his resonant tone that the men in the trenches are thinking of "chiffon" and then ruthlessly inspect the old lady's best dress to see if he can take her to the theatre. The melting of Dowey is finally admissible, and his formal reception of parting gifts from the other charwomen, including The Submarine, is a nice touch. Here, with or without the silent finale, there is a mood of the war that is true for a whole people, one that gilds dark depths with silvern light.

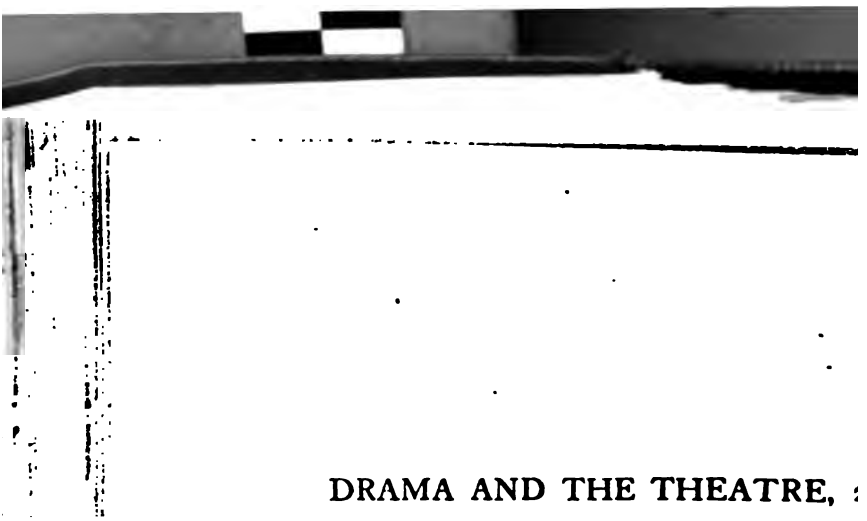
When the Barrie programme was first arranged there were three war plays, but the possibility of including Miss Barrymore in The Twelve Pound Look caused the management to retire one war play from active service. The exchange could not but be wise. Barrie has never contributed anything more incisive, more capacious, more generous, more profound, than



this short stinging commentary on male illusions, and Miss Barrymore has never given so serious or so spirited a performance. In a short play there are all kinds of technical difficulties. To prepare for an incident is almost impossible and to present an incident without preparation is to leave out the dimension that makes for reflectiveness. The author of The Twelve Pound Look surmounts these difficulties like a master. With a few strokes of characterization and reminiscence we have before us three complete persons, the woman who rejected the egoist, the woman who accepted the egoist, and the egoist. The broadness of Mr. Dalton's acting as the successful man rather detracts from the play, but Miss Barrymore is always in the picture — reasonable, ironic, perceptive, vigorous, humane. She is the event of the evening.

June 23, 1917.





DRAMA AND THE THEATRE,



SUNSHINE COMEDY

IT would be interesting to discover why Miss Rachel Crothers, who is a sensitive and knowing dramatist, decided to stoop to conquer. In spite of her stoop Old Lady 31 is decidedly to be seen. From the point of view of a producer it is even quite courageous, but it makes concessions which, granting how intelligent Miss Crothers is, provoke a morbid curiosity.

Any one who has ever talked to a theatrical producer may imagine how Old Lady 31 first hit that professional mind. Twelve old women on the stage for three acts, old women in the decrepitude of an old ladies' home. You can imagine this thought impinging on a Broadway mind. Nothing but old women — old women with their hair in nets, old women with high shell-combs, old women with shawls, old women with mittens, old women with caps — frumpy, toothless, deaf, quavering, senescent old things listening for the soundless footsteps of death. You may guess how this might strike a producer. Miss Crothers is an artist, with a strong sense of character. She could see it. But a producer! What do you see in the crystal, my dear? I see $42 in the house and ten old women on the stage. What do you see now, my dear? I seem to see twelve old women on the stage, and $18.75 in the house.

To produce Old Lady 31 for Broadway was not



considered possible until it was heavily "sugared up." After the fashion of sunshine biscuits and sunlight soap and sun-kist oranges, it was termed a "sunshine comedy," to begin with. That was undoubtedly supposed to remit some of the perils of asking Broadway to contemplate old age. It meant, in the sight of poverty and loneliness, the assurance of optimism which Broadway is supposed to crave. But the advertisement of optimism was not enough, the written bunkum of "wholesomeness" and sunshine. It had to be squirted into the play. And, in the prologue and also at the end, the syringe of sweetening was used.

The old couple Angie and Abe are leaving their sun-kist cottage — Angie to go to the old ladies' home, Abe to go to the poor farm. They have been married many, many years, but there are no children. "'Twan't to be." This is a real situation, one in which there is a great length of human retrospect, a definite pathos, a chance to reveal human nature and make the most of the drama to come. Well, Belasco couldn't have done a fouler deed. There was much excuse for the old lady's inevitable allusion to a lifetime of marriage without a single misunderstanding or a cross word. The couple next me held hands at this touching misrepresentation of intersexual experience, but I noticed he went out to smoke at the end of the first act and left her to boredom, just as usual. The rest of the prologue was a desperate effort to establish Angie's angelic character. She scrimped a little tobacco every day so that Abe might have a last smoke. "You beat all, mother." She regrets the poor auction at the end of their lifetime but rejoices that her old tea-strainer brought

three cents more than it cost. Think of it, the good Lord letting fall that crumb of consolation. "Ain't the pansies sweet to-day? I'm out here talking things over with the pansies." Then a little sunshine philosophy. "That's what the pansies understand."

Few people know What Every Pansy Knows, of course, but is there anything more pestiferous in real life than these cooing human beings? Angie is to be the sweetest of old ladies. When she refers to her "bridal wreath" and blows a kiss to her old house, when she gives Abe a flower to press in his bible or plucks a bouquet for Abigail, she is to be the dearest old thing. It is a matter of scientific record, however, that mature women who live in the past to such degree as this, who hold conversation with the pansies at sixty and rejoice over a three-cent episode at an auction sale, are merely half-witted. If they had had less sentimentalism and more sense, there would have been absolutely no necessity for an auction. No sea-captain could have survived to old age with such a spouse. While he was at sea he might have gotten away with it. That is one of the attractions of life on the ocean wave. But if he had lived "to hum," as Miss Emma Dunn and Mr. Reginald Barlow so exultingly pronounced it, he would certainly have arisen one night while Angie slept, and tenderly extinguished her for ever under the tea-cosy, and then strode forth to take the good news to the sheriff.

So far Old Lady 31 is sheer conformity to the professional idea of what Broadway wants. The minute we get to the old ladies' home, however, and have Miss Crothers reveal the human nature of the



women in that home, there is that precious veracity which is bound to dominate a comedy audience. Louise Forsslund's book may have given Miss Crothers many pointers, but it is she alone who made possible for the stage the reality of these superannuated types. The conventions of the stage required performers who were not actually as much "old ladies" as the title suggests. But this hardly interfered with one's sense of reality. One beheld, first, a rattlepate, spitfire, "gabby" person rocking violently on the veranda, in conversation with an imposing and funereal doctor's widow, joined in a few minutes by a saturnine practical person, a Martha in a universe of Marys, a "grouch." Nothing could have been more humorous than this idiomatic talk on the veranda. It was soon enhanced by the addition of a coy, gurgling creature with Victorian curls. The kindliness with which these "inmates" were observed in all their foibles and sensitiveness and pettiness and magnanimity was not at all like the sentimentalism of the prologue. It had an artist's sagacity and penetration, and took the whole performance out of theatricality and back to the immense divertiveness of the world we know.

The pathos of the play is the separation of old Abe from Angie, at the door of the old ladies' home. Its inventiveness is shown in the successful revolutionary proposal to have a place made for Abe in the home, as Old Lady 31. Had Miss Crothers gone into the business of projecting this story without knowing and respecting her human material, it would have been a thin entertainment. But she had such a strong grasp of the characters she proposed to deal with that the new factor of a man in their



communal life gave her just the chance she needed to exhibit their amusingness. Every kind of femininity comes out in the galvanizing presence of Abe, and every kind of masculinity is produced in Abe, and in the misogynistic Mike, by the presence of so many concentrating women. In all this part of Old Lady 31, the core of its drama, there are the qualities which make Miss Crothers a genuine contributor to American drama and America's capture of its own life. Aided by an admirable cast of women, and by a remarkable costume designer in A. Deutsch, a drama has been honestly placed in one of those neglected yet ramified areas of possibility which an integral group always provides, and not only has it been placed there with regard to its plausible occurrence but with regard to the fine interest of the group itself. By reason of her ability to appreciate such a group, to see its powerful interest regardless of the supposed needs of Broadway, Miss Crothers really equips herself extraordinarily to write genuine drama. And that one enjoys about Old Lady 31. But my enjoyment is marred by the stupid conventionality of the ending — Abe's windfall — and by the sunshine so assiduously poured in and about the character of Angie. Miss Crothers has integrity as a creator. It is worth fighting for, against Broadway and hell combined, and she has apparently not managed to plan for her integrity or to risk profit for it as much as she should.

December 23, 1916.

TWENTY YEARS AFTER

WERE man boiled and served with caper sauce I do not believe you could tell him from mutton. In his own mind man always fears to be a wolf. The much greater probability, of course, is his approximation to a sheep. If there were more deep self-knowledge in the prayer-book human beings would not exclaim against their turbulent desires. They would beg God for courage enough to keep from giving the hat-boy a dime. They would ask the good Lord to deliver them from the terror of wearing a Panama after September 15th. It is very gratifying to pretend to the Lord that we restrain ourselves with great difficulty from murder. The horrible truth, as we well know, is our mute submission to every form of grand and petty tyranny. Why are we strap-hangers? Why do we wear black evening clothes? Why do we go to funerals? Why do we eat baker's white bread? Why do we sign our letters "yours sincerely"? Why do we let Horlick and Hershey and Burrowes and Carter and all the other infamous vulgarians scrawl their ugly names across the fair face of America? Not because we are such surging iconoclasts that we need the Lord to keep us in a cage.

In relation to the things we like in the theatre there is no essential difference as to American behavior. There is the same mute submission to fashion, the same sheepishness about a change. The



Philadelphia lady who recently bemoaned the mistake we made in 1776 in breaking away from England has merely a formal grievance. We broke, but we did not break away. It still needs an Arnold Bennett to discover George Cohan in the American theatre. Our own critics, timid reporters for the most part, could not discover the excellence of George Cohan because no one had given them the lead.

The immediate cause of these observations is Mr. Lazarus, a comedy by Miss Ford and Mr. O'Higgins. The authors are friends of mine, and I have read many of the clippings from newspapers, and nowhere have I seen an original critical appreciation of their aims. Praise, yes, a great deal of it, and some obvious discriminations of an intelligent kind, but no positive grasp of these authors' accomplishment. It may be put down to the feebleness of Americans about validating their art. Had J. M. Barrie invented the same situations, had Arnold Bennett invented them, the critics would have approached the comedy in a proper frame of mind. They would not have stumbled over its lightness or slightness, stopped with its brightness or triteness. They would have functioned as critics. It is an enormous handicap to dramatists in America that only foreigners of a reputation that gives assurance to sheep can hope to be considered with anything like full seriousness and respect.

The situation in Mr. Lazarus would, one imagines, provoke in J. M. Barrie the same amusement that it did in its own authors; the same sly, slim comedic smile. It is an inherently amusing situation, and one that owes its value to its suggesting



life. A sentimental author could not have used it, but Mr. Lazarus is essentially unsentimental. Having no desire to romanticize, the authors could avail to the full of the contingency they proposed. They set in the background, over twenty years in the background, an ordinary love-at-first-sight marriage. They indicated the accident that cut the couple apart. They then showed the woman of this marriage as she had developed — developed from a shy young thing into a middle-aged, fussy, worthy, mentally inconsequential boarding-house keeper, now remarried to a greedy, pompous, self-deceived parasite male. And they brought up against this transmutation of the idyllic girl-bride the man who has kept the idyl for over twenty years, the successful but lonely first husband. For any one who has the presumptions of romantic love in mind, as the authors undoubtedly had, there are elements of high humor in this conjunction — and also of tenderness, because of the daughter that was born subsequent to the railroad accident which had separated John Molloy from his young wife. Molloy had been a Western miner. He is the sort of man who " comes back " with every sentimental intention to pick up the threads. The second husband creates a difficulty, but one that solves itself through his own crookedness. The real difficulty springs out of the change that has been wrought by time. So far as the authors of Mr. Lazarus were concerned, this change was grasped securely. It was wittily, humorously, delicately, sympathetically revealed.

To find slightness in such a comedy argues, to my mind, a taste for stronger flavors than Mr. Lazarus attempts to afford. It is no dramatic onion.

Where it calls for criticism is not in any inherent slightness of theme, but in certain feebleness of handling by the actors and in one fragility in the construction. That fragility, as I see it, is in the characterization of Mr. Molloy's daughter Patricia and of the penniless, whimsical artist-boarder who is in love with her. The mother is, so to speak, thoroughly exemplified. She is a fool about the mortgage. She is divertingly futile about the impecunious boarder. She drops life out of her hands as she drops the bed linen out of her hands, and she grabs on to John Molloy as she grabs on to the nearest chair. Dr. Sylvester, too, is exemplified in his work on "instinctive therapeutics" and the rest. The case of the boy and the girl is largely, on the other hand, the tenuous case of their charm. The main situation involves them but does not extract their full character. They are not inevitably salient. Had Miss le Gallienne the vigor to suggest the girl's personality, or had Mr. Powers the skill to appear as a young artist with backbone in his work, a man to carry the girl with him, the sketch of their courtship would take on roundness. As it is, it is thin. The thinness of John Molloy, however, is a different kind. It derives chiefly from the imaginative poverty of Mr. Henry Dixey. Mr. Dixey's utter lack of authority is not due to the authors of the play. They gave him a real conception — a man rich in texture as well as in purse, who came out of the West to find a wife and a child, and was doomed to lift a curtain on an empty shrine. This man Mr. Dixey promenaded as a creature pleasant so far as his footfalls went, and mobile of countenance, but not an atom like the man intended. One did not want a



miner with steel ribs in his chest and steel rivets to keep his heart from bursting open with tenderness. One did want something not so essentially perfunctory, so lazily and vacantly gracile. In Miss Florine Arnold as the wife, on the other hand, there is a real capacity for that broad but shrewd characterization which is necessary in such comedy. She had her tricks, as the authors had, but she joined with them in keeping a clear eye to life.

Comedy is the Roentgen ray of the spirit. It reveals without injury the realities which appearances fail to reveal. There is this digestive eye in Mr. Lazarus. Its wit is one element in its attractiveness, a wit quite fresh in the theatre, but the real triumph of the authors is their credible and amusing version of a fairy tale put to the test.

September 23, 1916.



THE LIGHT TOUCH

THE essence of priggishness, Samuel Butler remarks, is setting up to be better than one's neighbor. For persons like ourselves, who are really better than our neighbors, this definition has no teen; but I know a man to whom I'd apply it. We met him as we came out of the theatre after seeing Good Gracious Annabelle. He was obviously sustaining emotion. On his ordered young countenance he exhibited the traces of an anguish nobly borne. My companion, who knew him from childhood, addressed him thuswise: "Well, Blankie, didn't you have a good time?" Blankie answered: "Are we never to have a play in which there is not an intoxicated man? It is too disgusting. I have done nothing this winter but see drunken men on the stage." "The world," my companion smiled on him, "is all too clearly going to the dogs." To me she murmured, "The poor simpleton, he has absolutely nothing in his head, absolutely not a thing. And hear him talk, I beg of you, as if we'd been wallowing in the sink of iniquity." And on him, as he solemnly bowed his head to depart in a motor, very likely his mother's, she purposely refrained from smiling a gossip's perfidious good-night.

As to other inebriate performances this young man was possibly sound. I do not recall them. But his freezing disapproval of Good Gracious Annabelle showed too great a preoccupation with correctness.



It was his business at Good Gracious Annabelle to be amused. He had no other business there, and if that play did not succeed in amusing him he could only say he failed it or it failed him. He could not successfully raise the question of taste. For the play was so arranged from the start, both by author and by cast, that a neighborliness was aroused in the audience, and the one kind of man who could hold out against that neighborliness was the kind that sets up to be better than his neighbor.

The fable of Good Gracious Annabelle hardly needs to be mentioned. Its object is merely to give a competent cast its chance to be amusing, and to give the author play for her fancy. Everything really turns on the charmingness of Annabelle. Without that, without the fillip to our friendliness that is provoked by a piquant girl, there would be no excuse for taking up with her little adventure. But once we willingly adopt the tone of the good-natured lawyer who is guardian of Annabelle's misfortune, once we second him in taking her under our wing, the humor of her position and its solution becomes a source of constant entertainment. Seeing the pennilessness of every one with whom she is stranded in her stylish New York hotel, in the midst of giving a luncheon party, the tax on Annabelle's charm as well as her purse is evident. It is actually a farcical situation, but a single trace of farce in Annabelle would change everything. By the art of actress and author, however, this subsidized, extravagant, independent princess of the American realm manages in every impulse and gesture to capture that American blitheness out of which, one might loosely say, Henry James eked a greater part of his treasure.

comedy is of a cheaper metal, naturally, but of the same national currency that Mr. James delighted to specialize in, the currency with a winged victory for model. She is irresponsible, this Annabelle, but she does not lose her note of happy expectations and fresh confidence and sensible girlish candor. And when she decides to make her way via the kitchen, with all her friends as fellow-servants, she wins her audience to the extent of their issuing a blank check on credulity.

Fortunately for the dramatist, there is no limit to the luck through which Annabelle is hired as cook for a Long Island country-house. The swigging little spendthrift whose butler engages her is none other than the man who has come to possess her priceless share of stock. And the man who pays for her luncheon party and who bribes the spendthrift's butler to make him free of the Long Island estate is none other than the man who wants the priceless share of stock, and who, years before, etc.; which is the marvelous secret of the whole play. There is little in these contrivances to justify amusement in Good Gracious Annabelle. They are unusually preposterous. But no comedy depends less on its fable, or more on the manner in which each clash of character is heightened and displayed. Displayed, that is, for the sake of a pleasant silliness, of a merriment showing that sympathy has been engaged.

To turn a story of life into an amusing game a dramatist must either have a remarkable plot or a singular prettiness of fancy or a happy gift for engaging the sympathy of the audience. It is this last gift that, for most of those who see it, makes the slightness of Good Gracious Annabelle as irrelevant

as the vagrancy of a perfume. One cares nothing, as one sits at it, about the fatuity of the poet turned gardener or the squalor of the bibulous scullery-maid or the unrelieved drunkenness of the dissipated little heir. All these exhibitions of character and the lack of it come out only as part of a comedy pattern, in which the redemption of Annabelle's fortunes is the game at which one plays. She is a ninny about money, just as the hotel detective is an idiot about psychoanalysis, but we never feel that the drunkenness has any significance except in relation to Annabelle's escapade, and it is no more a thing to be moralized about than the departure of Don Quixote from pacifism. Unless, of course, we are moralists like the Rockefellers, who unanimously frown upon indulgence in anything except industrial alcohol. The pattern of comedy in Good Gracious Annabelle is quite readily accepted as soon as Annabelle herself attains our sympathy, and to that she should be sufficiently helped by her completeness as a daughter of the feministic American gods.

If an Elizabethan came to New York and managed the dangerous journey from his hotel to Broadway and 42nd Street, I do not believe he would find as much amusement inside the theatres as he would on the earth outside, and above the earth, and underneath. If he sought Turn to the Right, I think he'd be amused by its quips but amazed at its imaginative emptiness and its vapid sentimentality. If he looked to Willie Collier in Nothing but the Truth, I think he'd be surprised at the exaggerations of the accomplished star's performance and dismayed by the want of dramatic resource and subtlety in developing so good an idea. If he saw The Thirteenth Chair, I

believe he'd be intrigued and excited, recognizing some old tricks and many new ones, and seeing distinguished perception in the work of Miss Margaret Wycherly. He might try many other plays, in the mood of a stranger seeking gayety and elation and a flight into the sun of comedy. I believe he could seek farther than Good Gracious Annabelle and fare worse. Neither Miss Vokes as scullery-maid nor Mr. Nicander as the master nor Mr. Roland Young as the poet would offer him performances at any great remove from his own tradition. They'd be likely to amuse him. And if the Annabelle of Miss Lola Fisher failed to pique him, I miss my Elizabethan guess.

January 20, 1917.

FOR THE ELEVENTH TIME

THERE is no good reason why, if you have lost him, you should seek out the T. B. M. But if you should be looking for him, in all the fat prosperity that is mixed up with corn bread and self-sacrifice, you can easily find him, very hot and probably a little drunk, at the eleventh reproduction of the Ziegfeld Follies. He sits at the Follies in rows, red-faced and genial and pop-eyed, his dinner an immediate and pervasive recollection, his drink between the acts a happy prospect. The extent to which he gulps at the semi-naked chorus is the greatest tribute there is to the shrewdness of the leg-show producer. Like a large fish floundering after a butterfly, he yearns toward the pseudo-nudity on the stage. Just how much nudity to give the T. B. M. must be a fine problem for the Ziegfeld management, the dullness of giving too little being apparent and the risks of giving too much being obvious. But nudity is undoubtedly the bait that fetches him to the Follies and it accounts for a good deal of that entertainment's otherwise unaccountable success.

Is there any objection to a semi-naked chorus? Not from me. But I do dislike to see sour, unripe and poisonous entertainment disguised by the over-employment of sex. If the Ziegfeld chorus were clothed in brown jaegers by order of the mayor, the paucity of the entertainment in general would be shockingly revealed. And just because I am not a

tired business man in an active state of anti-prohibition I decline to take glimpses of nudity in lieu of every other amusement. The titillation of sex is not of itself a sufficient evening's diversion, not even when the lingerie advertisement becomes incarnate and walks around — as a bride-to-be — on the stage.

As against the humbler variety show, with undertrained chorus and garish setting and shoddy clothes, there is always something to be said for the Follies. In everything that calls for a promoter with money at his command the Follies surpasses the kind of production that was stereotyped years ago. It uses electric light in a hundred ways and uses enough of it to flood a town. It has a large and quite noisy orchestra. The chiffon in one scene alone cost $3,000 or $30,000, and in every scene, semi-naked or the reverse, the costumes of the chorus are brilliant, audacious, superb. Whatever Mr. Joseph Urban does in the way of decoration is an attractive substitute for the stuffy settings that he came to banish. The blue distance he so often arranges is itself a fine relief in the theatre eye, and is just one note in his suave decorative scheme. But when these excellences have been dutifully contrasted with the slipshod failings of the older or cheaper musical comedy, something does remain to be said on the score of entertainment.

Two Ziegfeld fans, " released " by whatever firm manufactures these typical New Yorkers, felt it their mission to reënforce the orchestra the night I attended the Follies. Male and female created He them, and the male whistled while the female trilled. Judging by the zeal of this pair, much should be said for the music by Raymond Hubbell and Dave

Stamper, and it is only fair in my dullness as to music to insist that this particular music may be excellent of its kind. But if it be agreed that the rhythms of the Ziegfeld Follies are not routine rhythms, repeating on an elaborate scale the rhythms to which the Ziegfeld patrons have long been accustomed, then they are unique in a production where everything else is routine, the routine humor and the routine sensuousness and the routine Manhattanese magnificence. For, in spite of or because of the resources that distinguish this lavish production, there is nothing about it to suggest that it was produced by creative human beings. It is, on the contrary, institutional — in the sense that a hotel banquet is institutional. And for perhaps that reason, unfortunately, it seems to reach the tired business man where he lives.

There are oases in the glittering desert. Will Rogers in the wise patter that accompanies his rope-act is thoroughly human and amusing, and there is a small dog managed by Russell Vokes that is extremely funny as an inebriate. For the rest, apart from a rare moment or two, there is nothing in the exhibition of the comedians that is out of routine. Poor Bert Williams has an act which is watered down from all the leaves of past performances, and W. C. Fields merely substitutes tennis for billiards in order to repeat his juggling. Miss Fanny Brice has a good deal of cleverness though not much taste. It is only in her caricature of the Egyptian dancer that her particular kind of coarse humor has its opportunity. Two other comedians, Eddie Cantor and Walter Catlett, try hard, but a dismal memory of bug-humor and jokes about money and the stock rep-

resentation of effeminacy is all that I can now revive.

There must be a cause for this aridity, aside from the Ziegfeld dependence on the sexual appeal, and I am inclined to think that the biggest cause for it is the undemocratic character of the T. B. M. Of course the T. B. M. will stand for stock patriotism. Few things are more unpleasant than to have patriotism the excuse for tableaux in the Follies, and to have impersonators take off Washington and Lincoln and Wilson, but the business man rejoices in this sort of dreadful literalness and applauds "Can't you hear your country calling?" Where the T. B. M. is limited is in his enslavement to prosperity and the narrowness of the life connected with it, and it is the devotion of the Follies to the preoccupations of the prosperous that makes it so dull, outside of its sexuality. There is nothing humane about any one of the episodes that engross the producers. There is nothing that ventures on such homogeneity as Briggs the cartoonist can count on, or that has a glimmer of the national sentience of George Ade. There is only the showy exhibition of clothes, the "episode of the purse," the "episode of the information bureau," the "episode of the telephone wires," the "episode of New York Streets and Subway"— the purse, the railroad station, the telephone booth and Broadway all being symbols for the externalized existence of the T. B. M. The fact that sentimentality is revealed over the telephone, not money-humor, hardly alters the situation. In the life that Ziegfeld wishes to celebrate there is a place for sentimentality —"episode of the garden of girls."

He is by no means a regular New Yorker, this sympathetic patron of the Follies. Much more



often he is a business-seeker and business-dispenser from smaller cities, away from home and hungry for excitement. He is out of his safe reins and blinkers. He has no idea how to entertain himself, and every desire to be entertained. It is in boredom and the restlessness of boredom that he goes to the Follies, almost fatuously ready to be lured and allured.

If the business man were less antisocial there could easily be a leg-show that was also amusing and humane. The present narrowness of his existence, however, tends to keep the Ziegfeld Follies ostentatious and empty and dull. Even genuine comedians like Bert Williams cannot break the crust that keeps forming over the producers of the Ziegfeld Follies — for the real producers, after all, are the business men in front.

July 7, 1917.

THE POPULAR HIT

"THEY don't come much better than that." I agree with my unknown contributor. It is warm praise, but it gives the first fine, free reaction on the fun of Watch Your Step.

After all, it is a pleasant thing to live in a small town. Out in the big, cold world you know nobody, and nobody knows you. But here in New York we all know the local gossip, share in the local jokes, are on to the local celebrities. It isn't as if you lived in the great lonely city where people are stiff and formal, where nobody ever "loosens up." I am thinking of centres like Rockland, Me., where the standard is sixteen to one, sixteen seductive silvern remarks on your part to one golden token of silence on the part of the exuberant native. In New York there may be certain provincial drawbacks, certain narrow interests and island ways, but at least when our local talent is let loose we all feel the coziness and neighborliness that comes in a one-horse town.

Take, for example, our accomplished townsfolk, Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Castle. Everybody in New York knows the Castles. On Broadway they are in the midst of intimate and often communicative friends. And when Frank Tinney says: "Vern, you'll be in the hall of fame all right, but you'll be there with Tracy the Outlaw, Captain Kidd and all the other hold-ups," everybody sees the jape, because the prices he gets for his dancing lessons are the talk

of the town. And when Mr. Castle says he likes singing, Frank Tinney remarks: "You say you like singing. Well, you married her." And the roof lifts. They give Mrs. Castle a piece in the show so that she may dance, but her singing is very Chinese.

Vernon Castle is a good deal of the show. Not every one knew he could chant, and it was a surprise when he sat down before two drums and proved his fingers were as rhythmic as his toes. In the play he is a fashionable Englishman, very creditable for home talent, but the chief thing was of course his dancing. There wasn't enough plot in the play to put in a teacup. He simply danced whenever he got rested. Every time Mrs. Castle entered she appeared in a new and more lovely costume, sometimes a figured and formal dress, sometimes little more than draperies of exquisite shades. Her performance was a delight, especially when she came careening in and just sailed lightly around the stage. She and he did a polka, the sort of thing people used to dance in the sarsaparilla age, before we discovered that dances could be made up like cocktails and gin fizzes. They gave many of these Bronx, Manhattan and Martini varieties as well, with fifty in the chorus to assist them; all to syncopated music, the music so fittingly named after a very disastrous disorder of the heart.

One reason every one in New York is keen about the Castles is that they are the living exhibits of a get-rich-quick romance. Frank Tinney says in the play that Mr. Castle used to be a waiter. Now he takes his salary home every night on a push-cart. In a big city this would not interest anybody, but

every one likes to drink in the appearance of such a marvel in a small place like New York.

In vaudeville, the most rigid form of entertainment, a man is disgraced whose act does not run like a machine. One of the joys of Watch Your Step is the local ease and freedom. The trick dog of vaudeville becomes in Watch Your Step the "good dog" that calmly lies down when he is told to stand on his head. It is very irregular and wrong. It would never do where people were not at home. But so little sense has this audience of the serious obligations of trick dogs, that they laugh as if the performer were a friend.

Another thing characteristic of a genial town is the fun you can have about grand opera. In a big city they take opera seriously. In Chicago people begin to get gloomy at the prospect of opera early in November, and the gloom rests over the entire North Side until the hilarious season of Lent. The first thing Chicagoans thought about when the war broke out was: "Thank God, we can cut out grand opera without letting the cat out of the bag." But in New York a pleasantly "jay" attitude toward opera is quite the thing. Watch Your Step has one scene revealing the Opera House. All the boxes are full of morose men reading the religious news, the only column left in their papers. The ladies' hair is all ablaze with private electric-lighted tiaras, Mr. Edison's latest cultural device — not so useful as his cement houses, but almost as beautiful. Several of the patronesses go home, complaining that the sleeping accommodations are mediæval. The stage is first occupied by Caruso, the only opera singer universally known. Caruso is succeeded by Frank Tin-

ney, the carriage caller, who immediately takes the real audience into his confidence about the expert comedian's favorite topic, nothing in particular.

When an innocent damsel asked her swain to repeat one of Tinney's jokes in the orchestra, the comedian came forward to remark: "Don't tell her. Make her listen herself." But he was too kind to give her name to the rest of Broadway. Tinney's color in the play was black. He changed his clothes from a carriage caller's to a Pullman porter's, and from the Pullman porter's to a coat room boy's, but like a good comedian, he never changed his face. Because of the plot he was not let come on till the second act, when the plot was removed. As the Pullman porter he made no effort to reach the plane of metropolitan wit. Of the proud father of twins who had just received a silver loving-cup from Colonel Roosevelt he solemnly inquired: "Do you get it outright, or do you have to win it three times?"

Watch Your Step does not keep up a serious plot. The story it tells New York is the story New York likes to hear, the story of its own times, its own foibles, its own favorites. It does not play up to, or down to, its public. Undisguisedly assured, it plays directly with its public, and, cleverly, vivaciously, successfully, plays on it. There is nothing fulsome about its flattery, nothing transparent about its device. It does not buttonhole New York too rudely or attempt too obvious an appeal. But with a great deal of adroitness and considerable real humor it rolls the ball — not too swiftly — until the audience is as excited as a kitten. And when it overtakes the ball — not too difficult — the audience lit-

erally purrs. It is an immensely successful entertainment.

It succeeds because it has a friendly common touch. A stranger from Mars might be puzzled at our motor jokes, our Erie jokes, our Pullman jokes, our hotel and coat room and dancing-school and grand opera humor. He might miss these touches of urban familiarity that make our whole world kin. But it would be his loss. He would not have had the advantages of living in little old New York.

January 9, 1915.

THE NEGRO PLAYERS

NOT long after Mr. Edward Sheldon began his career he wrote a play called The Nigger, which aggregated and solidified in one production almost everything that an audience of wine agents might require in a racial melodrama. There was, as I remember it, a rape committed somewhere off stage. There was a lynching in the wings. There was the imminence of a mixed marriage, a drop of Negro blood being discovered in the hero just in time to save the white fiancée. Mobs, I recollect, rumbled around the house where the fated man was communing with his soul, and these grim deliberations ended in his renouncing the governorship to which he'd been elected and deciding to devote his life to his own people instead. Such incidents were not selected, as Mr. Thomas Dixon might have selected them, out of a large natural endowment of malignancies. Mr. Sheldon had no animus against the Negro, but, like most Americans, he had remembered his newspapers too well. The things he associated with the Negro were the copy-desk conventional things. To the Negro he could discern for himself he had turned a wall-eye.

This conventionality has its splendid reaction in Mr. Ridgely Torrence's plays which Mrs. Hapgood has just produced at the Garden Theatre. Mr. Torrence is an Ohio poet who, looking at the Negro beyond the miasma that surrounds him, has seen

something so utterly different that his tenderness has occasionally got the better of him, and he has poured out his heart to the colored people like a hospitable wine. So different are the men and women and children whom Mr. Torrence has perceived for himself, it is scarcely strange that his impulse should be excessively generous, but one rejoices that this impulse enabled him to share the self-consciousness of a particular group of American citizens as it has seldom been shared before. There are three plays in the programme of the Garden Theatre, the first a comedy, the second a tragedy, the third a " Passion interlude " — the incident of Simon the Cyrenian in the way of the cross. And, under the fine direction of Robert Edmond Jones, these plays are acted entirely by Negro players. What marks the occasion in spite of Mr. Torrence's sympathies and the specialty of the players, is not, however, only racial solicitude or propaganda. Not all the propaganda or solicitude on earth can add a cubit to artistic stature, and unless there is artistic stature in a theatrical production it has no excuse for existing. Its purpose may be humane, but no purpose is humane enough to justify inhumane behavior to an art. There is nothing inhumane in the behavior of Mrs. Hapgood's enterprise. It is, all things considered, as fine an enterprise as the American theatre has seen for years. It is the emergence of an artistic Cinderella into the palace where she belongs. One undiscovered country in emotional America is Negro country, and these productions have disclosed it in a fresh and vigorous and lovely way. The costumes and scenery by Mr. Jones go far toward making the performances successful, apart from the dramatist's contribution, but

for myself the actors had unusual power and charm. Had the Negroes been Puritans perhaps they would not speak so musically. Thank the Lord they were not Puritans. Besides their gracious speech there is, despite much amateurishness, a real capacity for creating illusion. The performance of Miss Marie Jackson-Stuart as Granny Maumee had real limitations, but I found myself curiously thrilled whenever she raised her empty gaze and declared, "My eyes will yit behold!" Considering the other awkwardnesses in the play my responses were due, I suppose, to the adventitious eloquence of a racial identity between actor and dramatis persona. How could it help being poignant? But the artistic transportation of one's sympathies was accomplished, I think, in the first play, The Rider of Dreams.

What white man, what white magistrate even, has failed to chuckle over the Negro chicken-stealer? Mr. Torrence has taken a Negro for The Rider of Dreams who has, in some sort, this light-fingered habit, and he has made out of him the chief character in a flashing, lustrous comedy, the kind of comedy that reveals in waywardness such a riding of dreams as only a man touched with the spirit of Puck could imagine. The way Mr. Torrence has caught the poet in his Rider of Dreams, has kept the rollick and lilt of Madison Sparrow without disturbing his innocence, is a proof that with delicate art any kind of personality may be established on the stage. But in the intoxicated romance of Madison Sparrow, in the gallop of his imagination, there is no dependence on the popular idea of the Negro. Who supposes that in the whitewashed cabin, the child eating his bowl of mush, the strict woman of the house sprin-

kling clothes at the ironing-board to one side, a ne'er-do-well husband will scarcely start his supper before breaking out into a glorious humorous chant, at once racial and personal, which spurns the wife's leading-strings just as much as the laborious earth itself? No one reared on the fodder of newspapers is prepared for such a burst of poetry, but the domestication of it by Mr. Torrence is as completely convincing as it is enchanting. The bombast of the child is in Madison Sparrow, as one might expect, but the clouds of glory that stream from him as he wings along are too full of color and delight not to enlist the wilding in every heart. It is good luck that the part fell to an actor like Mr. Opal Cooper who could droop his wings as well as spread them, and exhibit the humor of a Sparrow's fall as well as his rise.

The tragedy of Granny Maumee does one grim service, it lifts a corner on the Negro aspect of racial hate. Here there is a reversal of that contamination which would thrill wine agents in The Nigger. The contamination which the blind Granny Maumee dreads is white man's blood in a family of royal Negro blood. Mr. Torrence's invention seemed rather feeble in this tragedy, and it was hard to listen to the actress who kept saying of Mr. Lightfoot, the white villain, "He — Would — Have — His — Way." You felt sorry for her, but you wished she could command a less mechanical utterance. The white baby, too (performed by a large doll), was too reminiscent of Broadway acting to make one happy.

The emotionality of Mr. Torrence reached saturation point in Simon the Cyrenian. Why Procula (Mrs. Pontius Pilate) should have pleaded so hard



for Jesus was not easy to grasp, and there was something not entirely simple about the machinery that projected Simon the Negro into prominence in the story of the Crucifixion. The symbolism of that crown of thorns which Simon also came to wear was not enough to carry the play. And is it not possible that Simon was a poor, trembling, intimidated man, on whom the soldiers laid brutal hands? This would be an irrelevant question if it were not relevant that Simon the Cyrenian provokes irrelevant questions. Its picturesqueness lifts it into interest, however, and keeps it from canceling a victory.

April 4, 1917.



WHITAKER'S ALMANACK

AS most people see it, a desert island is a place of extreme intellectual respectability. Thanks to Dr. Eliot and Sir John Lubbock, we know what that means. It means, among other things, spending a definite portion of each day pondering Plutarch's Lives. And hundreds of thousands believe in this programme, for a desert island. Deprived of access to current fiction and periodicals, they believe they would there take the literary veil. In the world he lives in, an unregenerate man seldom puts the classic programme in practice. He thinks highly of Spinoza, Aristotle, Gibbon, the Volsunga Saga. But he no more adheres to them than he adheres to the admirable habit of walking eight miles rain or shine. If he were cast upon an ultimate isle, he fancies, all would be different. Should a visiting ship's crew come roving into his secreted lagoon, he would be discovered under a plane tree conning the best translation of the Inferno. Such is his faith in the idyllic character of natural man. It is a pleasant but I fear a fantastic persuasion.

It has never been my own fate to be cast upon a desert island. I was, however, once cruelly marooned for twelve hours in a small hotel bedroom. There, by the courtesy of the Gideons, I found awaiting me a copy of the greatest book in the world. What were my emotions? Did I gratefully leap at it, plunge into it as a porpoise plunges his beak into

his native seas or a teamster into his native Anheuser? On the contrary, I perused with great care the hostelry's declaration of independence on the back of the door. I read a bit of newspaper that lined the bureau drawer. I knew that the book of Job beckoned me, the story of Ruth, the Song of Solomon. But a strange rigidity of spirit arrested me as I sought to open the Bible. I sank as a valley below the height of formidable culture. I was as water invited to come upstairs. At the other side of the height was the sun. I did not venture to deny it. But the shadows of Dr. Eliot and Sir John Lubbock painted the approach to elevation an incredibly inky black. I spent the rest of my isolation joy-riding through a time-table.

Out of sheer subserviency a Bible would go with me to a desert island. I'd take a Shakespeare. If possible, I'd also take a shovel and a lump of chalk, the two other requisites of a noble style. But for recreation's sake, for lazy gratification, I should not depend upon the classics. I would smuggle along with me some such diverting masterpiece as Whitaker's Almanack. Although English and conservative, Whitaker's is incomparable, the dean of almanacks. It is to the World Almanac of New York what opera in a foreign tongue is to opera in English, what the Republican party is to the Democratic, what the Martini is to the Clover Club. It is the porterhouse, the Corona, the J. P. Morgan of almanacks. This is its comparative excellence. It does not show why Whitaker's is a literary palladium. Perhaps it isn't. These things are matters of idiosyncrasy. But after years of browsing in its rich fields, after nights of long delectation among its placid, saga-

cious, indomitable facts, it would be infidelity not to speak for it even in the company of the classics.

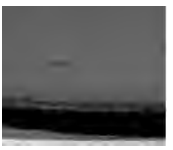
It is not for any "cultural" reason that I should wish to have Whitaker's Almanack on the island. It is not for any utilitarian reason. It is largely, I think, for the immense sense it gives of life, especially Anglo-Saxon life. Whitaker, after all, is no mere collector of reliable and disconnected facts. He is an indefatigable, scrupulous, positive, meticulous inventory-taker of the universe, "with special reference to the British Empire." He is the kind of man who, in a club, makes you believe that there's no place like home. He is the kind of man who desolates a Pullman car. But strictly under one's own control, obedient to one's whim, assiduous at one's slightest command, he is extremely interesting, even gratiating. And there is a certain humor in him. The unavailing pretentions and unraveled complexities of races and classes amuse him. "India has 147 vernacular languages," he permits himself to marvel, "of extraordinary variety." Why extraordinary, when you think of its size? But in a world where an inch of rain is "an inch of rain on the surface of an imperial acre," these foreign things are extraordinary. At the Cape of Good Hope, for example, Whitaker particularizes 13,704 Baptists, but he adds: "Of no religion, 1,077,998, of whom 1,047,233 were natives." These imperial shrugs are part of Whitaker's repertoire.

He begins, as he should, with a conspectus of the solar system. Fixed stars, star clusters, colored stars, clock stars, are duly noted. But my pleasure is not derived from this. It is such a thing as his table of "distance from London to the Capitals of

Europe" that seems ambrosial to me. It is 1843 miles from Paris to Moscow. It is 2030 miles from Constantinople to London "with the mails." What of it? Yet such facts engage me. So equally does the fact that Marquess Camden is John Charles Pratt under his title, and that I address him "My Lord Marquess!" So, equally, that the revenue of the Nizam of Hyderabad is £3,000,000 a year and that he is entitled to a salute of 21 guns. Should you need to know the correct salute for the Jam of Nawanagar, Whitaker can tell you. It is a mean 11 guns. But the Jam's revenue is only £151,000: the more revenue, the more guns. These lists of potentates serve no purpose of mine. They develop no principle. But to read them, to hop from Nawab to Raj Rana, from Rampur to Jind, is to be filled with a sense of magnificence. The world is multiform. From the revenues in opium to the 845,871,300 oysters produced in France, I proceed with a mind carefree, unconstrained, charmed. I did not know the French ate so many oysters. I did not remember that India depended so greatly on opium. I regard Whitaker as the most startlingly omniscient of men.

For the incipient vers librist, Whitaker's is a mine of raw material. Take South Africa, with its sordid materialistic imports, its exports so often primitive and romantic.

Fish, fodder, fruit,
Sugar and tobacco,
Wine,
Bark wattle, buchu leaves,
Ostrich feathers, mohair,
Hides and skins and



Wool.
Asbestos, whale oil,
Coal, copper, tin ore,
Diamonds,
Dynamite, and
Gold.

These are the most trivial offerings of Whitaker. He has 1065 pages. But they may indicate why I decline to be parted with him. He fills me with a sense of importance and virtue. Like business itself, he is sedative. He twists a tourniquet about the questing, disturbing soul.

February 5, 1916.

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

THAT clean sunlit morning she appeared at the door in youthful white, ready for the garden with a pink parasol. She said good morning in her bell-like chest tones, and I stood up with my finger in my book.

She was a wonderful woman, I thought, a wonderful creation, and I ventured to speculate as to her age. Her hair was still dark, her cheeks faintly tinged with color, but how long her cheeks had been tinged, how long her hair dark, I did not dare to guess. In all the capitals of Europe, as they put it, she had been at home for a generation, her eyes a swift look-out, her nose a cleaving prow, her tongue a keen blade. Various ambitions for this world she had sown and reaped. Her cheek was finely furrowed like a harvested field. Her presence in the white doorway made me uncomfortable. I wished to return to my book.

It is only by accident that such people as ourselves came together — mainly the accident of living in a land where guardian railings are uncommon, where it is not the fashion to have walls ivied, and hospitable with broken glass. But the accident was chiefly my secret, one which her tilted telescope could not take in.

She did not know me. That is to say, she was a person of high preoccupations and while I had swum before her vision she had never had occasion to

identify me or to suppose that I could have any significance worth her while. This morning, indeed, I arrested her attention, but largely because her eye roved too incautiously into the room off the veranda, and the human body is opaque. In this fact, had I remembered it, was my protection. I had only to remain politely mute to go on being inconsequential. In her eyes I was matter but not necessarily organic matter — a harmless brick, probably, in the path of her four-in-hand tour. But I did not remember I was a brick. I fancied I was human, and I fancied I was generating a current of attention which it was my instant, impulsive object to divert. Why I should have feared her attention I do not know, but I did fear it, and, standing helpless before her, I instinctively raised my book.

She gathered, simple soul, that I wished to bring her notice to it. Being timid and therefore ready for any convenient insincerity I at once pretended to myself that I had wished it to find her notice.

"Have you ever read it?" I asked eagerly.

Age may be circumvented in other people's eyes. It takes liberties with one's own. She had not her glasses, and she could not read the title.

"What is it?" she inquired, as if the pleasure of imparting the title must be mine.

A sudden sense of incongruity came to me. It was incongruous, in the first place, that I should be reading this book. It was not my habit. It did not represent me. This, as I guessed, could make no difference to her. She would not care if, away from her presence, I stood on my head. But even more incongruous was it to ask her if she had read it. I did not suppose she had. I did not really care,



either. But the embarrassment of our encounter had plunged me into a senseless question and I had to go on.

"It is," I said brightly, "The Imitation of Christ."

Had it been Admiral Mahan or the memories of an indiscreet Duchess or the history of the Florentines she would have understood. But Thomas à Kempis, presumably, was no friend of hers. Her manner, however, betrayed nothing. She may have had a thought. I do not believe she did. She did not pause for an instant. She felt nothing perceptible, no incongruity, no discordancy.

"Oh, yes," she rose to the occasion. "Isn't it charming?"

In all the capitals of Europe she had, as I said, pursued a career sufficiently proud. She belonged to the great world and she was a power in it, a power in personal relations through her vigorous and unscrupulous will, a power through her people in most of the affairs that count. She was an oligarch, an insider. Wherever a strip of red carpet intersected the sidewalk her motor would naturally stop of its own volition, and if the heavens were at that moment raining on the just and the unjust alike an umbrella would spring up by the side of her limousine, like a magic mushroom, and she would go up the steps as unconscious of the machinery of her class as a baby is unconscious of the milk problem. In all the conversation beyond those steps, on politics, on dominion, on character, on art, on style, on entourage, on the sultry affairs of men and women, her deep chest tones would be heard resonant and amusing, with enough friendliness in it to win attention to her and enough danger to make herself felt. I had

never seen her in action, but even a warship in bunting cannot belie its long predacious guns. She would be heard from in action, and when the smoke cleared away there would be a gash in the other fellow's hide.

Supposing that she was like this, letting one's fancy play about her, there was an unexpected pleasure in her reaction on my morning's book. Charming! She could not invent it. Her tone had that perfect surface which only comes with long practice in intercourse. It was not deferential. It was not glib. It was not heartfelt. It was simple, authoritative, complete. When she said that the Imitation of Christ was charming, there was no more for anyone to say. It was not impatient or perfunctory. It was, as she held it, adequate. But it closed the door on the subject impartially, without fury or furtiveness. It quite politely let Christ out.

I had such a One been to call, had she actually confided in me, I do not believe it would have been in any way different. In her set, very likely, the opinions about him would rapidly have been canvassed. There would have been glowing, excited young women, disturbed elderly women, angry wives of men downtown, a few thin, ascetic, unmarried women in whose dark eyes the experience would be deep. It would have come up at tea. "What do you think of him? What sort of impression did he make on you?" and every one would have gone into the discussion, one of those discussions which are the human equivalent of multitudinous twitterings in the sky. But she, bell-voiced, wrinkled, hawk-eyed, she would have no trouble about accounting for him. It would not occur to her to repel him or discountenance



him. If he fluttered the world she lived in, that fluttering she would regard with keen malice, without disturbance or alarm. On such a matter she would have equanimity, so long as he did not throw bombs or destroy governments. And she would appreciate his sincerity. "Isn't he charming?" It might readily be conceived.

As she left me to my book, to walk among the early flowers in the gracious garden, it seemed to me a deity had left me, one who was beyond my good and evil, a creature from another sphere. All the vertebrates, says a big tome, are obviously reducible to one style of architecture — and she and I are both vertebrates. But I was incapable of resolving our style. Is it necessary to attempt such things? Is it necessary to make human nature congruous? The struggle, if necessary, passes beyond my power. I was content just to watch her making friends with her quick grandchild down the garden, and see them en rapport among the flowers.

April 29, 1916.

THE SICKBED OF CULTURE

THE newspaper made breakfast rosy. Oats were steady. The coffee market had rallied. Linen was moving better. Lard and ribs were easier. But in the late afternoon I bought the Atlantic Monthly and thereupon came to behold the seamy side of this, our mortal adventure. A reactionary tendency, it appears, has developed in the realm of the spirit. There is a sag in culture. Culture is slowly but hideously being extirpated from our midst. The Extirpation of Culture is the very legend of the composition that details our shame. As if it were a weed, a heresy, an abnormal growth, culture is being rooted out and destroyed. Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! Come, sweaty varlets, scriveners, senators, vestrymen, chirurgeons, chymists, draymen, ironmongers and suchlike! Awake to the crisis. Attend to the disgrace and peril of our state.

It is a woman who appears with bitten visage from the sickbed of culture. Ordinarily she refrains from speaking of these things to the gross multitude. She "habitually says nothing to the professional optimists in the public square." But there is a time when the worst must be faced. And it is in this mood of chilled yet passionate reproach that our lady Agoraphobia fetches us to the shaded chamber of the culture we are doing to death. Culture, poor dear, "contact with the best that has been said and thought in the world," has had a time in the vulgar

jostle of modernity. As an image of this refinement (not as an image of this refinement's defender), imagine a fragrant New Englander, a reticule in one mitten, perhaps the odes of Sappho in the other, conscious that she is the "disciplined and finished creature," conscious that she is "intellectually exclusive," conscious also that "culture is inherently snobbish," being asked to fight her passage into a metropolitan subway. "Step lively!" The imperative jars the lady. She gingerly boards the train. On the platform there is contact, but it is not precisely "contact with the best that has been said and thought in the world." Do you wonder, seeing her chaste bonnet somewhat tipsy, her lips compressed, an alarming color tinging her marmoreal cheeks, that Barrett Wendell emits a tiny squeal of pain, that Edith Wharton rolls an eye to heaven, that the shades of Pater and Matthew Arnold flutter unhappily? New England culture is laid between sheets, with nothing but the Atlantic for hot-water bottle.

And who is to blame for this prostration of our precious culture? The gross multitude. Once culture had seclusion. The social scheme did not allow intrusive minions. "Still less would the conception of the public intellect have admitted the notion. Every one was not supposed to be congenitally qualified for intimacy with the best that has been said and thought in the world." But now, mainly due to "the increased hold of the democratic fallacy on the public mind," the slums pour forth dreadful aspirants to culture, encouraged by traitorous Brahmins; science contributes its stinking acid-stained barbarians; pragmatic philosophers take away the guardian standards

of beauty and truth. The angry daughter of the Brahmins descends to slang, the expletive of the continent, in her rage at the invasion. "Science is on top." "The classics are back numbers." We are "overrun by the hordes of ignorance and materialism." Our children sip English from the founts defiled by the poor, "an active and discontented majority, with hands that pick and steal."

Belonging to the upper classes, as she confesses, this gifted prosecutor is certainly entitled to our sympathy. For conceive, she is experiencing in her degree the loneliness of God. Looking down on the inimical multitude she suffers the pangs of isolation. "I begin to think," she observes sadly, "that our age does not really care about perfection." But since "culture must always be in the hands of an oligarchy," perhaps a voice de profundis might be raised to the heights. It is quite permissible, even if the monitor herself is unfortunate enough to use the German word "kultur" like an ignoramus, to be decidedly severe about the bumptious ignorance of the masses. It is quite permissible to argue that upper-class people are "apt" to arrive through riches at the æsthetic truths. But a passion for exclusiveness, a belief in the restriction of cultural susceptibility to the well-nurtured, is all to no purpose if she permits outsiders to come up like flowers. The worst handicaps of the neglected culture over which she wrings her fair hands is not "the materialism of all classes," "the influx of a racially and socially inferior population," "the idolatry of science." It is its supersession by another culture to which orthodox culture has not the clue.

To prevent this rivalry there should be a most

vigilant campaign against every new human expression. That is the best way to keep the oligarchy entrenched. If the ignorant foreigners, "immigrants who bring no personal traditions," come from countries of oppression, she must decline to believe that they had a literature and a culture. There is only one culture, our own. Perhaps in steerage you can evoke noises from a Lithuanian that sound like human speech. Yes, but soon that Lithuanian will have "the locutions of the slum." Beware of Lithuania. Do not pat the strange dog. He might bite a piece out of your culture. What if the young Jewess on the immigrant ship glows with assent when, without Russian or Yiddish or German, you query: Dostoevsky? Gogol? Tchekov? Lermontov? Tolstoy? Schnitzler? Sudermann? Artzibashef? Ibsen? Strindberg? It is not conversation. It is mere fraternal intercourse through modernity's names. The suppression of such names is the first great necessity of a pinhead conception of culture. And what of Poles and Spaniards and Italians and Scandinavians? What of Constantine Meunier, thrusting Walloons into culture? And H. G. Wells with his counter-jumpers and Bennett with his human inchworms, merely keeping the earth fertile, and Shaw with that dreadful winnowing fan in his head? These things must be stopped. Upstairs in the Brahmin mansion there is a delicate lady, disturbed by modernity. She hates pathology and economics. She hates that science which "challenged the supereminence of religion." She honestly cared for things of the spirit, attempted no royal road to salvation. For her comfort it is required that democracy, science, industrialism, suspend their evolutions. It is

a good deal to ask, perhaps, but she asks in the name of beauty and moral imagination. These, she takes it, she has loved above all others. It is not her fault if she insists with tight acidity. She hates crowds. She is confined within. She cannot take the air.

October 9, 1915.

A STYLIST ON TOUR

WHEN you speak admiringly of Henry James, the later Henry James, it is the platitude among a large class to say: "Life is too short. I loved the early Henry James. The Portrait of a Lady was wonderful, and I could follow him to The Turn of the Screw, but never again. It is probably my own stupidity, but I can't stand the later style."

It is a matter of taste, a matter, that is to say, of emotion, and you cannot argue a man out of his emotions. But for my own part, I am happy that I enjoy the later labyrinthine James. Had I possessed the open straightforward nature of my friends, had I been more like a locomotive engineer in my own psychology, I do not imagine that a supposedly tortuous style could give me exquisite pleasure. But if it is discreditable to be like this, at any rate it is a happy viciousness. And I am even sorry for my more straightforward friends.

It is utterly mistaken and not a little tiresome, however, to believe that this pleasure is all esoteric. If Henry James lacks Biblical simplicity it does not mean that he is not the sincerest of the sincere. A simple style, every one agrees, is the most desirable thing in literature, and there is no doubt that the more completely a man is inspired the more simply he expresses himself. But if a man is in the plight of the analytic, if at the moment of asseveration he is supremely conscious of the kind of man it is who

is asseverating, his expression is bound to be complex. It is this extreme self-consciousness, this incessant introspection, that baffles most readers. And yet there is little reason for being baffled. The greatest literature, no doubt, is the result of a completely confident interaction between head and heart, the authentic utterance of perfect realization. An artist may merely say: "The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass." But, so far as that impression was concerned, he was simple lord and master, and the result is to make us lords as well. But if an artist is constantly aware of the dubieties of impression, if he is so scrupulous that he refuses to give currency to any impression without recording the degree and the circumstance of authentication, why should we resent him? Perhaps Mr. James's power to lose himself in any conviction is meagre. Perhaps his interest in his emotions is sometimes monstrously greater than the emotions themselves. Perhaps he weighs his little feelings too preciously, putting his coal as well as his gold in the apothecary's scales. But even if his meticulousness becomes impractical at times, becomes an accountancy infinitely more delicate than life has any use for, exhibits a craving for adjustment so preposterous that it would petrify all vital processes for its accomplishment, the fact remains that few have so succeeded in submitting civilized intercourse to justly sensitive analysis. As for sincerity, it is his god. If he has recorded the last ripple of his emotional pebble it is, in his own phrase, "for sweet truth's sake."

To re-read The American Scene is to discover how intensely valuable is just this meticulousness. Here, if anywhere, we have the later James, the in-



sistent excoriator, and here, if anywhere, a finikin ineptitude would be betrayed. But a faithful reading leaves the sense of a fine, inclusive, meditative spirit, a man who seeks beauty first but who seeks it on the terms of the familiar social comedy in America. No one who does justice to these mild but remorseless discriminations can ever afford again to deprecate the "later James."

Take, for example, the quite casual characterizations of New York architecture. Looking at the Tiffany building, Mr. James does not dismiss it as a handsome reproduction. To him New York is an "ample childless mother who consoles herself for her sterility by an unbridled course of adoption." He does not baldly state that he prefers the Public Library to a skyscraper. "Any building that, being beautiful, presents itself as seated rather than as standing, can do with your imagination what it will; you ask it no question, you give it a free field, content only if it will sit and sit and sit." Similarly he can hit off New York in one phrase as "all formidable foreground." He can criticize its gridiron form for its "longitudinal avenues perpetually, yet meanly, intersected." He can defend a desired "vulgar" conformity on Riverside Drive by saying: "A house-front so 'amusing' for its personal note, or its perversity, in a short perspective, may amid larger elements merely dishonor the harmony." He can illuminate his own diminutive boyhood in New York in a single reference to "the great dim, bleak, sonorous dome of the old Bowery" Theatre. And the clearest note in suburban architecture is struck by his acute response to the houses' "candid look of having cost, as much as they knew how."

Equally searching is his eye for people. He took a "shining steamer" for Jersey on a summer afternoon, and drank in "the immense liberality of the Bay . . . the gayety of the light, the gladness of the air, and above all (for it most came back to that) the unconscious affluence, the variety in identity, of the young men of business." We get social New York at a cotillion: the "collective alertness of bright-eyed, light-limbed, clear-voiced youth, without a doubt in the world and without a conviction." He discerns "its instinctive refusal to be brought to book, its boundless liability to contagion and boundless incapacity for attention, its ingenuous blankness to-day over the appetites and clamors of yesterday, its chronic state of besprinklement with the sawdust of its ripped-up dolls"; disputable, if you like, but intelligibility itself. And who else has so discerned the empty imitativeness of "conspicuous waste" in New York. In worlds otherwise arranged, the occasion itself produces the tiara. "In New York this symbol has, by an arduous extension of its virtue, to produce the occasion."

Vulgarity of various kinds arrested his musing glance. The palaces at Newport he described in a characteristic mixed metaphor as "the white elephants, all cry and no wool, all house and no garden." The spoiled resort on the East Side had found "that pestilent favor of 'society' which is fatal to everything it touches and which so quickly leaves the places of its passage unfit for its own use and uninteresting for any other." He speaks of "the general grimness of the person he deals with over the counter." "The wage-earners, the toilers of old, notably in other climes, were known by the

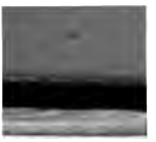


wealth of their songs; and has it, on these lines, been given to the American people to be known by the number of their 'candies'?"

He dislikes "the little tales, mostly by ladies, and about and for children romping through the ruins of the Language, in the monthly magazines." He sees many points of the Boston Public Library as "admirable for a railway-station." He speaks of "the Pullmans that are like rushing hotels and the hotels that are like stationary Pullmans." And in the hotel there is "the lone breakfasting child to reckon with; the little pale, carnivorous, coffee-drinking ogre or ogress, who prowls down in advance of its elders, engages a table — dread vision! — and has the 'run' of the bill of fare." Vulgarity in more flagrant form he also notes. He met some trying people traveling in the same stage-coach. "They scaled the pinnacle of publicity, and perched on it flapping their wings."

But it is not all even so temperedly censorious. Many things he loved and endeared, and he has a tender avuncular habit of personifying every single place that attracted him as an appealing feminine presence. New Hampshire, Newport, Central Park, Charleston, Florida — each of these personalities became for him alluringly feminine. A proclivity such as this does not fail, in his own pet word, to be "amusing."

The beauty of America is preserved in these pages, as one might suppose. He could speak of the American sky as "often peeled of clouds, in the interest of the slightly acid juice of its light," but there are passages of lyrical tenderness. "I woke up in the New Hampshire mountains, in the deep valleys and



the wide woodlands, on the forest-fringed slopes, the far-seeing crests of the high places, and by side of the liberal streams and the lonely lakes."

Deriving ideas from everything he witnessed, Mr. James read more into, and got more out of, democratic possibilities as he penetrated into America. Impatient of the South, of its "pretense of a social order founded on delusions and exclusions," he grew more patient, as he remained, of the national exemplifications. It is for his sense of these that The American Scene is most worth studying, though he had sharp words to speak of "bagmen" and skyscrapers, California and "untutored liberty."

It is nearly ten years old, The American Scene, and by this time it is probably relegated to the topmost shelf. But it is a mistake not to sit with it, and attune oneself to its moderated voice. That voice whispers inimitable revelations — revelations which Mr. James's inferiors will, as time goes on, deliver to us as their own, with a "punch."

May 1, 1915.

THE RUPERT BROOKE LEGEND

ONE may guess what the theme of Rupert Brooke means to Mr. Henry James. His favored word "felicity" perhaps sums it up. Here was a youth whom Mr. James early divined. He saw him first at Cambridge in the splendid setting of the river at the "backs." At "such a pitch of simple scenic perfection" almost no personality could have sustained the exorbitant demands of Mr. James's imagination. Mr. James has spent much of his career gently commiserating with the world on its heavy failure to fulfill his delicate expectancies for it. But with the figure and the gesture of Rupert Brooke he was immensely, mutely charmed. Like a child that holds his breath lest he disturb a top that is spinning perfectly, Mr. James hovered above the young poet in a familial solicitude. When the top moved off the carpet of England on to the hard boards of foreign travel, Mr. James was in exquisite trepidation. But the spin was vigorous. Through all the gyrations Mr. James at last felt an unexampled rightness. He was not merely contemplating a phenomenon that aroused his literary imagination. He was enthralled by a performance that sustained and fulfilled his notions of highest amenity. It was the personal, the social, culmination of Rupert Brooke that most enamored Mr. James.

And then to Rupert Brooke's nation and tradition

Letters from America, by Rupert Brooke. Scribners, New York.

there came an alien challenge. It was a challenge that penetrated to the heart of everything in civilized ways that had slowly and richly colored and consecrated for Mr. James. Without a flicker of outside consideration, without a tremor of readjustment, Rupert Brooke took up that challenge as his own, willingly risking and losing his life. It was not a sacrifice. It was, in the light of all unspoken preciousness, a consummation. At their face, which proved their real value, it took all the easy affirmations of his poetry. He had been the frank heir of a given England. He had enjoyed his heritage. At the challenge he went winging out of it, an arrow from its bow. This was more than the allured spectator could have reckoned on. There would have been leniency for almost any behavior. But the hard twang of Rupert Brooke's departure and finish left nothing for Mr. James to surmise. Just because he is exacting he is capable of rejoicing to the full in a perfection. So he celebrates the symbol of the end.

It is perhaps even a touch beyond any dreamt-of harmony that, under omission of no martial honor, he was to be carried by comrades and devoted waiting sharers, whose evidence survives them, to the steep summit of a Greek island of infinite grace and there placed in such earth and amid such beauty of light and shade and embracing prospect as that the fondest reading of his young lifetime could have suggested nothing better. It struck us at home, I mean, as symbolizing with the last refinement his whole instinct of selection and response, his relation to the overcharged appeal of his scene and hour. How could he have shown more the young English poetic possibility and faculty in which we were to seek the freshest reflection of the intelligence and the soul of the new generation? The generosity, I may

fairly say the joy, of his contribution to the general perfect way makes a monument of his high rest there at the heart of all that was once noblest in history.

To share completely this " joy " the reader should, I feel, be at one with Mr. James in the totality of his sense of English rightness and the totality of his personal sense of Rupert Brooke. For this generous effect, however, these letters from America are thin support. They were casual journalism, of course, never meant to indemnify so lofty a memorial as precedes them. They were addressed, as Mr. James says, with characteristic deprecation, to " a friendly London evening journal." But they are part of a personality about to become a legend. In so far as one's own imagination happens not to nourish a conviction of English " exquisitive civility," they are required to justify that conviction, or at any rate to corroborate Mr. James's out of their unaided substance. In the measure that they fail, the outsider is likely to modify " this ideal image of English youth."

The letters punctuate a journey taken in 1913. It ran from New York to Boston and Harvard, then to Montreal, Ottawa, Quebec and the Saguenay, Ontario, Niagara Falls. By Winnipeg it went to the Rockies, including an excursion to the woods, an impression of the prairies and their Indian descendants. It went as far afield as Samoa before recording the last utterance, the young Englishman returned to his own country and reverberating to the news of war.

" Touching at first, inevitably quite juven in the measure of his good faith " — so Mr. J



defines Rupert Brooke. But conventional is the first word I should apply to the poet's reactions on, and from, the United States. It is true he was writing for the Westminster Gazette. When he announced he was going to trail his "many-colored mantle" across the United States his friends had exclaimed "My God!" "'El Cuspidorado,' remarked an Oxford man, brilliantly." "One wiser than all the rest wrote: 'Think gently of the Americans. They are so very young; and so very anxious to appear grown-up; and so very lovable.'" But even with such admonitions to remember and respect, there was a chance he might have done more than despatch to England what he had so clearly brought with him out of the vast fusty annals of prejudice. Other Englishmen less recommended for amenity, less identified with the "frequent extraordinary beauty of the English aspect" — H. G. Wells, to wit, and Arnold Bennett and even G. Lowes Dickinson — had seen in this Philistia something that probed for sympathy and understanding. But what Rupert Brooke's so exalted tradition conferred was not an ampler sympathy and a swifter understanding. It was, if anything, a pleasant though stuffy immunity. He did not disdain. He brightly, humorously mirrored. But he did not sufficiently penetrate. The love of truth in him was not so keen as to compel him to make profitable conjecture. He was tolerant, very, but not really receptive. He could observe. "The upper-class head is long, often fine about the forehead and eyes, and very cleanly outlined. The eyes have an odd, tired pathos in them — mixed with the friendliness that is so admirable — as if of a perpetual never quite successful effort to understand some-



thing. It is like the face of an only child who has been brought up in the company of adults." But the jocularity of Harvard Commencement was aboriginal to him. He might have been a later Marius beholding antics at once impossible and picturesque.

He saw Niagara Falls with poet's eyes. Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Quebec, Winnipeg, he inspected affably and reported with friendliness and wit. But the small, shifty, cruel, mean and untrustworthy expression of the French Canadian priest, the flabby face, shifty eyes, inhuman mouth of the real estate youth in western Canada, the fabulous vulgarity of the fat Jew in Quebec, were the realities that got deepest between his ribs. Had he not seen the Saguenay and the Rockies, had he not kept on to Samoa, he should have but commemorated nostalgia. The South Sea Islands captivated him. "Never, clearly, had he been on such good terms with the hour, never found the life of the senses so anticipate the life of the imagination, or the life of the imagination so content itself with the life of the senses; it is all an abundance of amphibious felicity." For all the interestingness of his earlier chapters, it is this chapter, and the concluding moment of reverie on the declaration of war, that help him abide.

To make a memorial to Brooke's personality it is perhaps well that Mr. James should have testified. Brooke achieved in person that miracle of felicity for which the social scrutinizer looks so widely and so vainly. He had not merely the grace of spirit. He had also that gift so unusual outside unwarrantable romance, the accompanying grace of form. For Mr. James, who had so often detected genius without amenity or amenity without genius, this happy child



of the English intention was something he could peculiarly realize. Whether his ecstacy is not too private, however, is a question his intricate introduction arouses. There are passages in which he seems rather to contract his whole gratification to a class and a clime. This sort of thing is petty. Fine personality is not so esoteric that it requires such a nice scenic and institutional equipment. Had Mr. James written a fifth gospel I have no doubt he would have been completely susceptible. A thousand delicate implications of beauty and nobility and supremacy would have been unfailingly traced. It may be affirmed, however, that the uninformed took no pains to ensure their Personality against the ineptitude of the crude and vulgar man. They simply spread Him on a record and their brief story has survived for many peoples and many ages. It is that sort of success for a chronicle of the divine which makes one wonder whether it is the infinitesimal adjustment that most signifies, or the clean bravery of the event.

February 5, 1916.





POETRY



1887–1915

FOR some years past the work of Rupert Brooke was known to a limited circle as that of a bright new light in English poetry. With the war he emerged for a much wider public. In the heyday of youth, he immediately volunteered for active service, and he went out to meet war and possible death with his music attuned. Five heart-searching dauntless sonnets were written in 1914, previous to his departure on the expedition to the Dardanelles. In the Ægean, before he had written again, it fell to him to meet one of the advance claims of war. He died of an infection on board a French hospital ship at Scyros, April 23, 1915. With his end came every emphasis on his war poems and their great vogue in England. And now, for minds still possessed with the thought of his young death, his complete work is brought in view.

In his lovely and tender lines on the immaculate conception Rupert Brooke plays humorously with the figure of the Angel Gabriel. He saw the heavenly messenger as proud and changeless, "radiant, untroubled in his wisdom, kind," but he ventured to suggest the golden wire that kept Gabriel's halo in place. Any portrait that fixes his own attitude as "immote, immortal," invites a similar smile. It is easy, of course, to understand the rapture he inspires. A beautiful soul, says an ancient critic, harmonizes

The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke. Lane, New York.



with a beautiful form, and the two are cast in one mould. It is natural that those who ever looked even casually on Rupert Brooke should wish now to emphasize this harmony. The very antithesis of the theatrical poet, he did not need to be named to be noted. Eyes of a steady, fathomless blue looked his strength and sensitiveness. Clear-featured, free-haired, sunburnt, he was one of the most arresting and satisfactorily handsome of men. But he was not a classic marble or in love with classic marble. Edward Thomas speaks of him as "a golden young Apollo." Walter de la Mare recalls "the radiance and repose of an immortal." Gilbert Murray says that he "typified the ideal radiance of youth and poetry." Winston Churchill insists on his "classic symmetry of mind and body, ruled by high, undoubting purpose." Lascelles Abercrombie strings out the words exquisite, unforgettable, supreme, perfect, incomparable, unspeakably beautiful. All this seems to make him "a gold speck in the gold skies." But his work belies it. Like the Mary of his poem, under his breast he had "multitudinous burnings." And like her, he was "pitiful with mortality." To forget that is to miss the magic of his swift, wayward, trenchant, disdainful, winning, reticent, reverent spirit.

He was a singer, not an aspirant to song. Terse, compact, graphic, he was undoubtedly an analyst in his medium. His marvelous gift for words was not all ebullience. But the power that fuses a lyric out of the conglomerate of experience was born in him. He took his impulse from his nature, not from the suggestion of books. The tradition of rhymed form he accepted completely, but he never indentured him-



self to great poets. He rose serenely, as they did, out of the amateur. And if he retold the fleetingness of love, or fancied wooers turned to dust, or held a muted sob in words, or sharpened his wit on religion, it was because he conceived the poetry in these things anew. Life, one may well see, was not easy for him. It was not so much that he was born into a world of searchlight hostesses and ladies impecunious in emotion, a world of tennis and chatter and afternoon tea. These he deflected. But he inherited the mortgage of the civilized, the handicap of tilled fields and paved roads and deliberate efforts at "sleeping out." No wonder he loved to swim at night. He had imagination and the nostalgia for freedom and danger and magnificence that goes with it. One is conscious of that nostalgia in him, the ache of emptiness, asking for something more responsive than the English girl éprise, something more violent than tennis — until the war. But of all this, strangely enough, he made verse.

At his highest moment Rupert Brooke gave proof that "the harmonious soul is both temperate and courageous," yet the dissonances of his career make his final music sweeter. In these collected poems one is forced by his strict sincerity to observe the fluctuant progress of a spirit, and if it were not for the ache and wincing of that spirit, the juvenility and self-consciousness, the defensive wit and aggressive satire, one might believe that his halo also was held by golden wire.

Never that mere warbler who "is melted and softened beyond what is good for him," Rupert Brooke was still sensuous, sensitive, complicated, intensely personal. Too sophisticated from the be-



ginning to sing in obvious strains, he arrayed himself against criticism by being critical himself. Even those early poems conceived by the fledgling "on the edge of silence, half afraid, waiting a sign," are guarded against fatuity, "rife with magic and movement." But in spite of his fine sophistication he was too much the experiencer to halt because ugliness and disregard afflicted him, because the hunger for love preoccupied him, because the skepticism of youth compelled him to sing certainties when certitudes ached for acceptance. He was not the sort to fail of certainties, however little they were; but the life of the modern young man, the life of nature attained out of complexity, he was able to reconcile to exquisite phrase and music.

There are many poems that show his livingness by exposing the bruises of broken flight. These bruises he earned. He had in him much of that ferocity "which only comes from spirit, which, if rightly educated, would give courage, but, if too much intensified, is liable to become hard and brutal." This was a tendency in Brooke. Jealousy, Menelaus and Helen, The Voice and A Channel Passage — all grimly amusing — showed sensitiveness ready to inflict revenge. And delightful as such vigor was in the midst of mawkishness, it beat savagely against a world not concentric with desire. But he was the enraptured as well as the irreconcilable. In Dining-Room Tea and Blue Evening and Town and Country he could surely lift his wings.

His Phrygian harmonies, "the strain of the fortunate," had great loveliness in Grantchester and The Treasure, and The Great Lover. His Dorian harmonies, "the strain of the unfortunate," were

more completely music in Peace, Safety, The Dead, The Soldier. "I want to have one harmony warlike," said Plato, "to sound the note or accent which a brave man utters in the hour of danger and stern resolve, or when his cause is failing, and he is going to wounds or death or is overtaken by some other evil, at every such crisis meets the blows of fortune with firm step and a determination to endure." So Rupert Brooke sounded the accent of the brave. Ripe to accept a destiny, he sang of it as few men have ever sung.

In the present volume there is included a sympathetic and subtle estimate by George Edward Woodbury, and a capable biographic note by Miss Margaret Lavington. There is also a romantic portrait. But neither these last, with their unconscious stress on pathos, nor the final poems, should take one completely away from the treasures of Rupert Brooke's becoming. For he lives in these, and by these too he is entitled to live.

December 18, 1915.

VACHEL LINDSAY

SOME people are grudging about genius because they are grudging about divinity. They do not think the common man gives any pledge of divinity. They feel "genius" is an aristocratic attribute and they confine its attribution to the fit and few. This kind of worshipfulness has its mean aspect. It is primitive and denigrating. But even those of us who do not kneel readily, who want to say our prayers standing, cannot pretend that genius, the personality which rises out of the mediocre plane and lifts the eye to azure, is a personality frequently met with or easy to be sure of. Glancing back down the American vista that is known to us, the personalities that mark a great way of living, that catch the inner eye and feed the inner fire, are so infrequent that the vista is still like a shining street at dawn. There are men of genius in that lane of the sun — Lincoln, Whitman, Washington, Emerson, William James; perhaps others whom people better versed can sincerely name. But the begetters of the spirit of this nation, the complete and adequate persons of their time who still swing like stars in our vision, find few new companions to keep their stride.

It is difficult not to smile when Miss Harriet Monroe, nervous guardian of the corn-fed poetic chick, speaks of the distinguished Irish poet Yeats "honoring" Vachel Lindsay by particularizing him as "a

A Handy Guide to Beggars, by Vachel Lindsay. Macmillan, New York.

fellow craftsman." Mr. Yeats is indeed distinguished but he did no egregious honor in honoring this poet of Illinois. Perhaps it was wonderful that a listener to the music that whispers in the disengaging twilight should have caught the strangeness of Lindsay's ruder rhythms — rhythms ruder in the sense that orchestra is ruder than solo, or a crowd ruder than a wraith. But from admitting Lindsay's claims on Yeats, obvious enough to any one who sees Lindsay's dimensions, it is a long way to predicting or proclaiming the fullness of his powers. Genius is a large word and to be used warily. It is enough perhaps, to say that here is an emerging figure, a figure youthful and powerful, stone taking wings.

Against Vachel Lindsay there is something to urge. "Righteousness," he says in the preface of this book, "is as filthy rags." Yet in his poetry there is, if not much righteousness, much dualism of the kind that John Dewey has characterized. "There is no greater tragedy," says Mr. Dewey, "than that so much of the professedly spiritual and religious thought of the world has emphasized the two ideals of self-sacrifice and spiritual self-perfecting instead of throwing its weight against this dualism of life." Mr. Lindsay is very much a moralizing poet and in his morality there is a great suspiciousness of the devil, the flesh and the world. "No clean human passion my rhyme would arraign," he says of the Russian dancer; but the apogee of The Firemen's Ball is the rage of desire. "By absence of passion, he is made free." The same simplicity of morality comes into his poems on the war — "a curse upon each King" — and into his poem on Omar Khay-

yam, " a book of the snares of earth." The indignation of the verses against white slavery, against the United States Senate, " swine within the Senate," and the contrary celebration of John P. Altgeld do one good. But it is an expensive orgy when one thinks of the " shining universal church," the " angel-song," the world of moral Dutch Cleanser and spiritual Sapolio, in which the poet richly rejoices. His idea of " a land transfigured " is a dreadful one. It is a sort of perpetual World's Fair and Christmas card and Sunday School picnic rolled into one. Sacred capitals, clean temples, millions of boats paddled by angels with silver oars on a festive lagoon, " and silken pennants that the sun shines through " — his heart bounds with zeal at this vision. " Sages and sibyls now, and athletes clean, Rulers of empires, and of forests green! " — these throng his paradise. And he thinks happily of " halls with statues in white stone to saints unborn to-day." " Creed upon creed, cult upon cult," " shrine after shrine " — he craves incense, ritual, censers; he has an enormous appetite for communal buildings gleaming in a communal sun. This is a side of his inspiration which leaves the present writer cold, though one of his finest poems is religious, Heart of God.

O great heart of God
Once vague and lost to me,
Why do I throb with your throb to-night,
In this land, eternity?

O little heart of God
Sweet intruding stranger,
You are laughing in my human breast,
A Christ-child in a manger.

Heart, dear heart of God,
Beside you now I kneel,
Strong heart of faith. O heart not mine,
Where God has set His seal.

Wild thundering heart of God
Out of my doubt I come,
And my foolish feet with prophets' feet,
March with the prophets' drum.

The beauty that is in this poem is not the clamant beauty of The Congo and General Booth and the unpublished poems that Mr. Lindsay recited to many audiences last spring. But where the recited poems often need Mr. Lindsay's reading, as a roll of film needs the instrument to project it, there are many poems like Heart of God, not glorious boom, boom, boomelays or clang, clang, clangelays, that live for a solitary reader. It is characteristic of Mr. Lindsay that he does not always write for solitude. As Adventures While Preaching the Gospel of Beauty attested, and as this present volume now attests, he has his fullest being in association with fortuitous crowds, people in the common ways of life, people addressed and trusted as imaginative, and all born attuned to poems that have in them the beat of the waves of the blood. Were one asked by Mr. Lindsay if it were possible to go through Florida and Georgia and North Carolina, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, Missouri and Kansas, reading poems to pore white trash and blockade whisky Americans and old Southern ladies and railroad conductors and college boys and undertakers and farmhands and pious grandfathers and Mennonites and livery-stable keepers and stackers in the harvest-fields — one might

have doubts as to the value or even the expedience of his mission. But because he has vigor and courage, a hunger for romance whetted by years of life in Springfield, Illinois, a yearning for enchantment in the face of American flatness, he has been able to find in the hills and fields of the South and the plains of the West many deep and dear responses to his searching heart. Not always is one satisfied with his playfulness. He is too strenuously the sprightly poet, the humorsome disciple of St. Francis, the resolute adventurer insisting on a picturesque world. But such strictures are not final. A Handy Guide to Beggars is too varied to be invalidated by any one squeamish reaction to it. It is much too full of loveliness and fun, happy invention and sudden shivering song, to be disregarded because young Illinois feels he ought to feel like a fighting-cock and starts to crow without showing cause.

I say loveliness. There is the family in the Blue Ridge. Lindsay describes it and the people in it, "nothing to remind one of the world this side of Beowulf." "An inner door opened. It was plain the woman who stood there was his wife. She had the austere mouth a wife's passion gives. She had the sweet white throat of her youth, that made even the candle-flame rejoice. She looked straight at me, with ink-black eyes. She was dumb, like some one struggling to awake." These people have bad news while their guest is with them. A brother brings word that the host's mother is ill. There is the host's refrain: "I can't think of anything except my dying mother. I can't think of anything except mother is going to die." In the morning Lindsay leaves with this emotion: "A money-claim has defi-



nite limits, but when will you ever discharge your
obligation to the proud and the fine in the House of
the Doom? You intruded on their grief. Yet they
held their guest sacred as their grief."

The fun of A Handy Guide for Beggars plays over special incidents and general conclusions. There is the general conclusion as to the tramp and his Missions. "A mission, an institution built by speed-maniacs who use automobiles for speed-maniacs who use box-cars." The special incident of a hideous coal town is amusing. "I'm awful glad to see a white man," confesses his host. "This place is full of Bohunks, and Slavs, and Rooshians, and Poles and Lickershes (Lithuanians?). They're not bad to have around, but they ain't Cawcasians. They all talk Eyetalian." He read his poetry to that family. "No, kind and flattering reader, it was *not* above their heads. Earnestness is earnestness everywhere. The whole circle grasped that I really expected something unusual of those boys with the black-diamond eyes, no matter what kind of perversity was in them at present. I . . . dreamed that this ungoverned strength before me, that had sprung from the loins of King Coal, might some day climb high, that these little wriggling, dirty-fisted grandsons of that monarch might yet make the world some princely reparation for his crimes. After the reading the mother and father said solemnly, 'it is a good book.'"

Here is one of the poems Mr. Lindsay read:

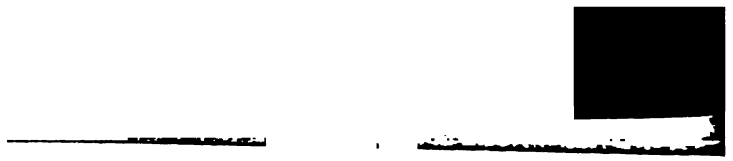
LINCOLN

Would I might rouse the Lincoln in you all,
That which is gendered in the wilderness,
From lonely prairies and God's tenderness.



Imperial soul, star of a weedy stream,
Born where the ghosts of buffaloes still dream,
Whose spirit hoof-beats storm above his grave,
About that breast of earth and prairie-fire —
Fire that freed the slave.

No one who fails to read this travel book should believe that he knows Vachel Lindsay or all fine things that American literature has to show. Lindsay makes New Jersey no less poetic than Georgia. Democracy is not with him a phrase. It is something poignant of the people. It supposes an absence of classes, a conjunction of all kinds of human beings. It is that faith in the excellence of human beings which makes life worth living. It finds that excellence by inclusiveness. It is different from any other and all other religions. It has at root a kind relation to God because it has a kind relation to man. It is more than liberty, equality and fraternity. It is a feeling that the mortal planet is a good and decent place to live in and on. It is the thing Lincoln had. It is the thing Whitman had. It is the thing Emerson partly had. It is the thing that the West has, and not the East so much, the thing that the Negro took away from the South and yet the thing that abides, though not singularly, in America. It is the thing that elects one man president rather than another in time of war. It may be religious. Perhaps it is. It comes down from the mountains, it walks among the people, it plows through snow to say who shall be president. Of course Lindsay is too simple about books. He is not fair to the men who do not live among sense impressions. He is not fair to the men who give their lives to truth, the doctors, the men of letters,



the lawyers, the men who strive for balance, the men who will not gamble their lives, like the harvesters. He has crude gestures, this emerging poet of Illinois. He has intonations of the preacher and fancifulness of the infant wearing a paternal silk hat. He finds it hard to forget Hathor, the Rose of Sharon and ambrosial nouns. He forces his note. But to say these things is not to reach the kernel. Where else in this country of emergence is there in combination nationalism so free and swinging, religion so vigorous, human contact so unprejudiced, beauty so adored? Sometimes it is the adoration of beauty we attend at, mere services in her name. But not seldom he is at the heart of conviction and ecstasy and splendor. The man who tramped as a beggar through our states could afford to go light because of his affluence. He had every man for his comrade. He went afoot with a people. He marched with the moon and the sun.

November 18, 1916.

NEW GROUND

WHEN you twitch your ears for a small boy you create a special and apparently inexhaustible craving. You cease to be an ordinary human being in that boy's eyes, you become an incarnated ear-twitcher. The sole justification for your existence, as he sees it, is your delicious faculty for twitching your ears. In this respect the small boy is not unlike the American people. The American people is not quite so simply pleased but if you once do deeply please it, if you once become identified in its vague monstrous mind with any particular gesture or intonation, you cannot get much response from it except by duplicating the performance that aroused and fixed its taste. You may not wish to repeat it. You may, like Peter Dunne or Mark Twain or George Barr McCutcheon or O. Henry, have a few little intentions of your own. But there is something slow and obdurate about the public. Like a horse, it is hard for it to form an idea. Once formed, an idea is a devil's pitchfork in its brain.

Because of this trait in the public Songs and Satires will probably be disappointing. In Spoon River Anthology Mr. Masters did more than write poetry. He presented his poetic themes in a way peculiarly dramatic. His method, obviously, made for striking success with the public, and it created the notion that as an inventor of method Edgar Lee

Songs and Satires, by Edgar Lee Masters. Macmillan, New York.



Masters stood supreme. Only a madman would have harped on the original device, and Mr. Masters is not a madman. In the absence of another startling device, however, he has not the same salt of novelty, and those who savored just the novelty in Spoon River will undoubtedly deem Songs and Satires flat.

Mr. Masters, however, is the same Mr. Masters. Different in method and varied in theme, Songs and Satires is penetrated with the same quality as Spoon River Anthology. And because Mr. Masters is a deep poetic spirit, one of the greatest in the America of our time, it would be an immense pity if the absence of a certain special excitement should keep the readers of Songs and Satires from finding the treasures inside.

As to the essential Mr. Masters there are various opinions. Out of Loudonville, Ohio, there recently came one unspoiled opinion, straight from a suffering heart. "Spoon River," said the Loudonvillian, "is not life,— it is death. It does not present life truly, wholesomely. It does not satisfy the demands of the poetic nature. It is too earthly. It creeps like a reptile through slime and evil. We are depressed; our imagination is destroyed, and we close the book with a disgust for its vulgarity. There is life in this book, say what you will. But it contains none of the 'noble and profound applications of ideas to life.'"

At this opinion one may imagine Mr. Masters himself lightly smiling. One may imagine admirers and advocates of his receiving it with wrath. But why should a poet, a fine poet, so disgust and depress and perplex? Why should he seem slimy and



vulgar and unwholesome? Mr. Masters is big enough to make any attempt at a reasonable answer worth while.

The best man to answer, so far as I know, would be Thorstein Veblen. If one thinks Masters big as a poet, it would be feeble not to apply that word or some more eulogistic word to Veblen as a social analyst. The confusions that arise about Mr. Masters are due to his arrival on the stage at a period of economic and moral transition. For the right clues to this transitional period there is no observer so fertile, so brilliant, so inexorably honest as the author of The Theory of Business Enterprise.

What the man from Loudonville is butting into, in Spoon River and Songs and Satires, has a quite terrific name. It is, in the jargon beloved of Mr. Veblen, "the cultural incidence of the machine process." Under the circumstances, evidently, the Ohioan kept his temper remarkably well. The difference between him and Mr. Masters is a considerable difference. It is a difference, using another catchword, in "norms of validity." The Ohioan's norms rest "on conventional, ultimately sentimental grounds; they are of a putative nature. Such are, e.g., the principles of (primitive) blood relationship, clan solidarity, paternal descent, Levitical cleanness, divine guidance, allegiance, nationality." Being an honest, conventional man, he argues de jure. His characteristic habits of thought are "habits of recourse to conventional grounds of finality or validity, to anthropomorphism, to explanations of phenomena in terms of human relation, discretion, authenticity, and choice. The final ground of certainty in inquiry on this natural-rights plane is always a ground



of authenticity, of precedent, or accepted decision." He is, in short, a normal "conservative" man, and his disgust and distress over Mr. Masters is due to the fact that Mr. Masters is one of the first poets to become really articulate in a civilization affected by the machine.

"On the whole," says Mr. Veblen, "the number and variety of things that are fundamentally and eternally true and good increase as one goes outward from the modern West-European cultural centers into the earlier barbarian past or into the remoter barbarian present." Loudonville, in this connection, stands for the remoter barbarian present; and Mr. Masters for the number and variety of things that are decreasingly good and true.

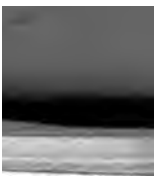
It is no wonder that Mr. Masters is out of touch with many sincere Americans. He is breaking new ground poetically, ground that "is neither ecclesiastic, dynastic, territorial, nor linguistic; it is industrial and materialistic." One discerns all through Songs and Satires that this has come to pass. Mr. Masters belongs definitely to an age and sphere that has new habits of thought. It is dissonant with fine literary tradition. But those whose experience and sympathies have been similar to Mr. Masters's, can see that it is not his personality alone which gives the troublous accent to his work.

"The machine process throws out anthropomorphic habits of thought." "The machine process gives no insight into questions of good and evil, merit and demerit, except in point of material causation, nor into the foundations or the constraining force of law and order, except such mechanically enforced law and order as may be stated in terms of



pressure, temperature, velocity, tensile strength, etc. The machine technology takes no cognizance of conventionally established rules of precedence; it knows neither manners nor breeding and can make no use of any of the attributes of worth." "The machine is a leveler, a vulgarizer, whose end seems to be the extirpation of all that is respectable, noble, and dignified in human intercourse and ideals." "To the technologist the process comes necessarily to count, not simply as the interval of functioning of an initial efficient cause, but as the substantial fact that engages his attention. . . . The process is always complex; always a delicately balanced interplay of forces that work blindly, insensibly, heedlessly. . . . The prime efficient cause falls, relatively, into the background and yields precedence to the process as the point of technological interest."

Taking these bits from Mr. Veblen, torn bleeding from their context, the question is whether Songs and Satires does really in any way correspond. For the most part, as I see it, it does correspond. It is not in one poem that Mr. Masters seems to me to represent that modern population which Veblen calls iconoclastic and materialistic. It is in the general temper and animus he has about life. That population is said to be "growing more matter-of-fact in their thinking, less romantic, less idealistic in their aspirations, less bound by metaphysical considerations in their view of human relations, less mannerly, less devout." They have here a poet who shares their habits of thought. It does not matter whether Mr. Masters is writing a poem about motherhood or Godhead, about Bryan or St. Francis, about mortality or Jesus or the Loop or romantic love. He



may supplicate the Lord or eulogize Simon Surnamed Peter or brood over Dead Faces or sing of a mistress In Michigan, but in every case his " norms of validity " are the norms of a new manner of feeling and thinking, a manner to which most of us are not habituated, a manner which it is sheer delight to find so beautifully sung.

If a man fail as artist one resents especially any difference in his habit of thought. A machine-process version of the Jesus story, in which the savior is a buoyant radical fighting the Bar Association and the Civic Federation, might easily be an exasperation or a joke. But when one has come to it after the wit of the poem on Bryan, the sense of human process in So We Grew Together, the agony of In the Car, the humanity of Simon Surnamed Peter, " one of our flesh," one is acclimated and has sympathy to spare. So it is with the conversation between man and God on the subject of electrons, or the Michigan Avenue mistress In a Cage. So it is with the mordant Arabel and the eloquent bitterness of The Helping Hand, and the portrait of William Marion Reedy, unless you happen to be the person the poet calls " dung."

When a man chooses to write poetry about fundamental themes, about love and God and death and pain and sorrow and war and failure and desire and spring, he cannot let his feelings come through those poems unless he has accepted a way of taking life. Mr. Masters is a man of forty or so, skeptical, unsentimental, unloyal, deharmonized. Against faith in anything but a vague " radicalism " and the evidence of his senses he reacts vigorously. He is not merely rational, like poets of the eighteenth century.



He writes of men de facto with a strong refusal to explain them or at any rate explain them away. The exciting thing, however, is to discover how a world so remorseless and harsh can sing to the ear of this poet, how phenomena so little ameliorated can be so rich in communicable feeling. There are "silences," of course. Love is a Madness is a silence. What You Will is a silence. Arabel, A Study, Portrait of a Woman, bespeak inexplicable processes and moods. The ballads of Launcelot are archaic tapestries. St. Francis and Lady Clare is more intentional but hardly more affirmative. The Altar, like For a Dance, is a jeweled song. But the main tenor of the volume is to affirm as lyrical and beautiful in their own way the new norms of validity, the only norms that this age is likely to know. O Glorious France is less characteristic, more obviously "noble and profound." It is a pæan to men not Chicagoan, "prophetic and enraptured souls." But it stands almost alone.

A mixture of narrative and dissertation is common in Mr. Masters. He employs it in matter-of-fact idiom in most of his longer poems, in swinging verses elsewhere:

> So he stepped from the Sun in robes of flame
> As the city woke from sleep.
> He walked the markets, he walked the squares,
> He walked the places of sweets and snares,
> Where men buy honor and barter shame,
> And the weak are killed as sheep.

The shorter lyrics, of which there are many, are nearly all rhymed. But there is one unrhymed lyric, The Altar, with these words in it:



Thy face is the apple tree in bloom;
Thine eyes the glimpses of green water
When the tree's blossoms shake
As soft winds fan them.
Thy hair is flame blown against the sea's mist —
Thou art spring.

Another use of rhyme in narrative may be illustrated from In the Cage:

For dancing you have cast
Veil after veil of ideals or pretense
With which men clothe the being feminine
To satisfy their lordship or their sense
Of ownership and hide the things of sin —
You have thrown them aside veil after veil;
And there you stand unarmored, weirdly frail,
Yet strong as nature, making comical
The poems and the tales of woman's fall . . .
You nod your head, you smile, I feel the air
Made by the closing door. I lie and stare
At the closed door. One, two, your tufted steps
Die on the velvet of the outer hall.
You have escaped.

"Why life hurts so" is not the male's normal inquiry. But in his Portrait of a Woman, a woman of whitened hair, Mr. Masters is unwontedly tender:

You seem to me the image of all women
Who dream and keep under smiles the grief thereof,
Or sew, or sit by windows, or read books
To hide their Secret's looks. . . .
Perhaps your pathos means that it is well
Death in his time the aspiring torch inverts,
And all tired flesh and haunted eyes and hands
Moving in pained whiteness are put under
The soothing earth to brighten April's wonder.



In these forty-five poems, half of them fairly long, there are not more than a dozen unrhymed verses. If one can speak of technique apart from the sum of a poem, Songs and Satires is technically remarkable. But the supple and diversified method is only a sign of the nature finding voice.

April 29, 1916.





ILLUMINATIONS

WE seem to be getting new popular notions as to rhythm. It is not so very long since Ruskin raged about Wagner pretty much as he raged about Whistler. It was the correct philistine performance to resist the rhythm of Wagner and set him down as noise. People have already forgotten this senseless conservation. The conceptions of dance rhythm and verse rhythm have similarly, recently, emancipated themselves. For many years the dancing "master" had complete charge of the thing called choreography, and he cared for nothing but the most regular rhythms. In poetry it was practically the same. "Hey diddle-diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped over the moon" — the sublimations of this rhythm were enjoyed as "real" music, especially when achieved by the great Algernon Charles, and fun was made of Walt Whitman. It was not felt then so much as now that whatever the beauty of Swinburne's rhythms Whitman's had their own beauty, to which every ear could become attuned. The wonder now is that everyone did not perceive right off that the modern flexibility in verbal rhythm was no more extraordinary than the flexibility in the rhythm of dancer or sculptor or painter or musician.

The free rhythms of Mr. Carl Sandburg are a fine achievement in poetry. No one who reads Chicago Poems with rhythm particularly in mind can fail to

Chicago Poems, by Carl Sandburg. Holt, New York.



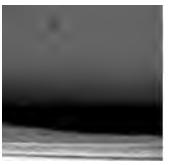
recognize how much beauty he attains in this regard. But the more arresting aspect of Mr. Sandburg's achievement is, for myself, the so-called imagistic aspect; the aspect, that is to say, which the subject-matter itself reveals. The rhythm, one may insist, is part of the imagism — one may resent having the so-called subject-matter considered separately. Rhythm, however, is far from the dominant novelty in Carl Sandburg, and it is convenient to assume that his rhythms are delectable to many who yet do not admit the beauty or originality of his way of approaching the world.

The originality of the imagist approach can scarcely be long disputed. Never before has there been such firm seizure of the object to be presented. Never before has the impression of the moment been so poignantly dramatized. Make a contrast, for example, between the Anacreon verse on an old man and the Sandburg verse on a baby. One is a brief description, the other a brief characterization. The comparison is not on all fours but at least it is suggestive of just that quality in the modern poet which is making imagism what it is. Take the old man first:

> Gray are my temples long since and snowy my hair:
> Gracious youth is departed; old are my teeth,
> Brief is the space of sweet life that is left to me now.

Mr. Sandburg's verse runs this way:

> The child's wonder
> At the old moon
> Comes back nightly.
> She points her finger
> To the far, silent, yellow thing



Shining through the branches
Filtering on the leaves a golden sand,
Crying with her little tongue, "See the moon!"
And in her bed fading to sleep
With babblings of the moon on her little mouth.

Each of these poems is an epigram and each characterizes a special period of life, but the antique epigram is generalized still-life, the modern is particularized life in motion. Contrast in turn the Greek light-house speaking, and the fire in the bowels of the earth. Says the light-house:

No longer dreading the rayless night-mist, sail toward me confidently, O seafarers; for all wanderers I light my far-shining torch, memorial of the labors of the Asclepiadae.

Mr. Sandburg gives his conception this unity and emphasis:

KIN

"Brother, I am fire
Surging under the ocean floor.
I shall never meet you, brother —
Not for years, anyhow;
Maybe thousands of years, brother.
Then I will warm you,
Hold you close, wrap you in circles,
Use you and change you —
Maybe thousands of years, brother."

The amazing difference, as it strikes me, is the skill of the modern in concentrating attention. The presenting of a figure, a picture, an image, is, as quotation will show, a frequent consequence of the imagist purpose. But Mr. Sandburg illustrates above all the intensity, the momentousness, that is



gained by declining to refer each object to some remoter cause, by tending to treat each object as self-contained, purposive in its own measure, dynamic. "I am the Great White Way of the city." "In western fields of corn and northern timber lands, they talk about me, a saloon with a soul." "I am the crumbler: to-morrow." "They offer you many things, I a few." "I am the nigger, Singer of songs." "Here is a tall bold slugger set vivid against the little soft cities." "I am a copper wire slung in the air." This is not a trick. It is simply a pushing of the imagination to the centre of the will. And even where there is no such unity as the will provides another kind of composure is secured, a visual composure. There is none of the laxity that comes from splitting attention several ways. Consider these envisagements of a commonplace world:

FOG

The fog comes
on little cat feet.

It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.

NOCTURNE IN A DESERTED BRICKYARD

Stuff of the moon
Runs on the lapping sand
Out to the longest shadows.
Under the curving willows,
And round the creep of the wave line,
Fluxions of yellow and dusk on the waters.
Make a wide dreaming pansy of an old pond in the night.



WINDOW

Night from a railroad car window
Is a great, dark, soft thing
Broken across with slashes of light.

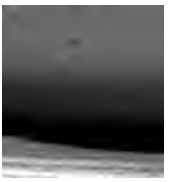
At first these poems may appear too innocent of self-interpretation to mean anything, too impressionistic to compel the name of beauty — to give that completion which has no shadow and knows no end beyond itself. But such exquisite realization of the scenes that gave Mr. Sandburg the mood of beauty is in itself a creation of the beautiful. Mr. Sandburg has such art in representing these scenes and the actors in them that doubt as to his capture of beauty could only occur to a person filled with a wrong expectation. If expectation is unfulfilled, indeed, it can almost certainly be deemed wrong, for these imagist verses are as good as any of their kind.

But this is not to say that all of Mr. Sandburg's poems are inspired. I am not much impressed by his vision of Chicago. This is not because Chicago fails of poetry. In some ways Chicago is hideous. It is noisy and harsh as a construction camp, chaotic as a collision, raw as a wound. It is fringed by a dirty rim of railroad track. It is gathered up into a centre for the apparent purpose of being suffocated with an iron "loop." Even inside its girdle the streets are narrow and savagely paved and the alleys obscene. Outside the loop the city sprawls for miles and miles, desolate in stretches half-occupied, congested in manufacturing districts and baleful slums. Beneath a tarnished sky it fumes on its busy way, bleak in winter, sweltering in summer, without graciousness, dignity, pride. But for all this ugliness



there is something about Chicago not like the imbruted employer of children and leech of factory girls and general blusterer and roustabout that Mr. Sandburg concocts for us. Mr. Sandburg is quite right that children work, "broken and smothered, for bread and wages," but Chicago is not legitimately "haunted with shadows of hunger-hands." No more is it a laughing giant. It is a work-shop, but largely a work-shop for business enterprise, a wasteful, inundated, scrambling, shoddy, manufacturing city, a city irradiated to a marvelous degree by hope, by faith, by charity, careless, generous, inefficient, as well as coarse, husky, cunning, strong.

October 28, 1916.



THE WAR

BELGIUM

IT is easier to be wise about Belgium now. It is easier to see now that the people of Belgium were wrong to trust their safety to a feeble international pledge. They were wrong to live unsuspecting on the brim of an imperial volcano. But going back to July, 1914, and putting oneself in the place of a small Belgian professional man, a doctor or a lawyer or a school-teacher, putting oneself even in the place of M. Maeterlinck, it is difficult to imagine what he personally could have been doing for security. The Belgian was born without consultation into one of those small sovereignties that really exist on the sufferance of more extensively organized sovereignties. He was born in literal mortal danger on this account. But the major part of politics in most countries is ordinary party politics, ward politics. The thing that most occupied the Belgian schoolmaster was probably the row with the local priest and the flagrant illiteracy of his district; that and his internecine racial quarrel. He had little to do with international relations and their contingencies. He was not thinking of Uhlans, machine guns, abdominal wounds, franc-tireurs, indemnities, ambulances, rape, mutilation, soup-kitchens, flight, any more than people in New London or Old London were thinking of them. He was probably thinking, in July, 1914,

The Wrack of the Storm, by Maurice Maeterlinck. Dodd Mead, New York.

of strawberries, Charlie Chaplin and picnics. And then, up in Olympia, the Old Guard of Germany decided to let him have it full in the face.

Waiving for a moment the unwarrantable weakness of Belgium, which Belgium did not realize, the temper of the German invasion has to be imagined. It was not malignant. It was, to start with, merely roughshod. When the Germans were mobilized in their gray-green myriads, so formidable, so efficient, they undoubtedly had a collective fear of Russia and her ally France and a collective sense of an inimical England. As they marched to their mobilization trains, roses in their rifle-barrels, women by their side, they were thinking grimly of Russian and French mobilization. They had less than nothing against Belgium. But once the ruler of Germany and his agents had ordered the invasion of Belgium there was nothing for the German army to do but invade Belgium. So the German schoolmaster and doctor and lawyer went forward, quite aware that the maneuvre contemplated for many years was about to be carried out, but not at all translating that maneuvre, or wishing to translate it, into terms of Belgian misfortune.

There is something so hideous about such an imposition of force that one seeks to blame it on the man higher up. One seeks to agree with pro-Germans of one's acquaintance that Belgium was inevitably chosen in the line of callous military necessity. These "inevitables" are, however, too easy. It is quite appropriate for M. Maeterlinck to say toward the end of his book: "If our enemies prove that they were deceived and corrupted by their masters, they prove, at the same time, that they are less

intelligent, less firmly attached to justice, honor and humanity, less civilized, in a word, than those whom they claimed the right to enslave in the name of a superiority which they themselves have proved not to exist; and, unless they can establish that their errors, perfidies and cruelties, which can no longer be denied, should be imputed only to those masters, then they themselves must bear the pitiless weight." This is profoundly true. If it could be inevitable that the German people had to join an army that in turn was obliged to invade Belgium, what sort of people can they be deemed?

Much is possible, of course, in a great nation where the people defer to the high control of their rulers and military chiefs and have little to say as to their journalists, their clerics, their educators. In such a nation public opinion is so nurtured that it is hard to imagine the people's temper and will. It is mere sentimentalism, however, to assume that the German public made no assents to war. It is, in fact, inconceivable that the European war could have been launched even by rulers with their hands on the lever of universal military service unless there was a state of mind receptive to it in Germany. That receptiveness was not all due to the will to war. It was not all due to premeditation. There was much warranted righteousness in Germany's attitude toward Russia and England. She had more than once seen their maps of diplomacy on which the mountains bristled like bayonets and the rivers gleamed like swords. But these maps bristled and gleamed all the more intensely because there was in the German patriotic heart the self-assurance, the animosity, the deeply inculcated nationalism, the narrow interpreta-

tion of foreign relations, the reciprocation to war, for which any Zabernist might hope. It is inconclusive to assert that individual Germans did not realize or proclaim these things. One must judge by massed Germans. A glass of water looks colorless, the sea is green.

The guilt of the invasion of Belgium lies deep on the German people. How deep the guilt is, books like M. Maeterlinck's make known. It is a curious thing that German public opinion did not so reject in advance the infamy of invading Belgium as to keep the general staff from incurring it. The day had passed when a national misunderstanding with France could be availed of, even by a calculated lie similar to Bismarck's, but Russia and England remained as enemies whom the world might conceivably have come to side against. On the day of mobilization millions of fair German heads must have been lifted proudly at the thought of engaging a blunderingly brutal power like Russia, of laying low a rival craftily respectable like England. But such brave pride loses its glamour when one thinks of a squalidly hideous entrance into European warfare by a half-protected back-door. It is the dirtiest act of a dirty predatory tradition common to England, Russia, France, Italy, Belgium, as well as Germany itself.

For many years M. Maeterlinck lived apart from Belgium. He spent his time in France, an artist in sensibility, in pensive and decorative sadnesses, gentle metaphysic. The Belgium of those days was not the obvious dependent of to-day. It had, indeed, no genuine security. It held nothing but a valueless note at sight on a supposititious international con-

science, but it was apparently a successful prosperous semi-industrial land, the Belgium of Leopold and the Congo. The Congo! When Germany began to treat the poor Belgians as if they were as little human as the Congoese, M. Maeterlinck's imagination inflamed. He became, by virtue of his literary reputation, the voice of his nation's tragedy. He went to Milan in November, 1914, and to Rome in March, 1915, to appeal to Italy; and in London in July, 1915, he addressed an audience of sympathizers at the Queen's Hall. These addresses, together with all the essays he published in any way relating to the war, and a sketch written in 1886 called The Massacre of the Innocents, are collected in this volume. And in its pages there is the echo of horror, anguish, despair, hatred. He is, in truth, the spokesman of a ruined country, a country which it is beyond the power of man to compensate or restore. A new Belgium, indeed, will succeed to the Belgium known to M. Maeterlinck and ourselves. The earth will fructify again. But the Belgium of which he now writes as a patriot has been destroyed in spirit and in flesh.

Nothing the Germans required for their development can be held to justify this sacrifice, and no philosophy but the basest predatory philosophy can excuse them. Belgium remains, and ought to remain, the inescapable accusatory witness in the present war. Belgium is not a witness to the virtue of France or Russia. It is only slightly a witness to the enlistment of England in the war. But it is definitely, helplessly, immovably, a proof that the German military authorities could count on the German people, could formulate a filthy code and secure

its application, could disregard world-wide presumptions as to honor and responsibility. When all this is said, however, even with the eloquence and loftiness of M. Maeterlinck, there is no wisdom in it but the wisdom of recrimination and punishment. It ties dead Belgium around the neck of living Belgium. It declares for remorseless vengeance. "In rejecting hatred I shall have shown myself a traitor to love."

Hatred is as fruitless as love to restore the Belgium that the Germans destroyed. The German people should not escape the practical consequence of taking to the sword. They should not emerge from the war in shining armor. They should emerge after conclusive defeat. But this defeat, which is now probable, should not be greeted exultantly by the friends of Belgium, any more than the friends of the Congo should rejoice to have seen Belgium seared. M. Maeterlinck sees Germany as intrinsically base. He sanctifies the duty of punishment. He demands an eye for an eye. It is the spiritual blindness of all men agonized. If the prostration of Germany could secure international peace there might be some purpose in M. Maeterlinck's tenor. No such purpose really exists. In dealing with criminals there is no value in the doctrine, an eye for an eye. As M. Maeterlinck indicts the Germans they are criminals, but something beside hatred must be brought to the case.

The whole world is involved in the case of Belgium. M. Maeterlinck would have had the whole world join in punishing Germany, and that is understandable. But quite as important as the lesson from reprisal is the establishment of Belgium and

states like Belgium on a basis that makes violation a breach of organized union rather than a breach of treaty diplomatically private, suspicious, insincere. The best way to hate the Germans that ruined Belgium is to hate the nationalistic anarchy that made the invasion of Belgium an irresistible short-cut in the game.

It is perhaps this issue, not clear in M. Maeterlinck's volume, that begins to develop for the reflective mind. Not the kind of mind represented by timid neutrality, nor yet the kind of mind represented by a solicitude for the German vote. Belgium was not once mentioned at the Republican National Convention, and it seems to have sunk out of American electioneering consciousness. It remains, however, the symbol of the detestable international system which gave birth to the European war. Those who question that system will be sympathetic to M. Maeterlinck but not satisfied by him.

October 14, 1916.

PATRONIZING THE WAR

MAX EASTMAN does not pretend to reach his "understanding" of Germany through any preference for things German. His understanding is the outcome of his general mode of thinking and merely part of his theory for the war. If an ordinary partisan spoke of "understanding Germany" it would mean only one thing, it would mean he excused and favored Germany. In Max Eastman's case it means that he declines to see Germany as the agent of trouble in an international system otherwise practicable. It means that he sees Germany quite clearly as the first European "part" that buckled in a system that was bound to end in trouble; and therefore, regarding the system as questionable, he feels it idle to blame the faulty German part in particular. The thing to do is not to recriminate. What is the use of getting angry with a defective mechanism? The subject is to be approached in the manner of the psychologist, the diagnostician. The only possible service is to prescribe against its recurrence.

In no place does Max Eastman use any such trite mechanistic phrase as "system," but that remains the interpretation one has to put on Understanding Germany. It is not merely that he pleads that the Germans are human. He implies that their behavior his been inevitable. You are indignant about Bel-

Understanding Germany, by Max Eastman. Kennerley, New York.

gium? he asks. You ought to be indignant about "the causes of war." You resent the raw and brutal frankness as to the violation of Belgium. How about the refined and tactful casuistry as to the violation of Greece? You are inflamed over the atrocities. How about the "atrocities committed by English, French, Russian, Serbian soldiers?" You hate "German" militarism. There is no such thing as German militarism. The Germans are not a different kind of people from the English. They are the same kind of people placed in different circumstances. F. S. Oliver and Lord Roberts talked "militarism" just as the Germans did. So does General O'Ryan in New York. If you hate militarism, "do not delude yourself into imagining it is Germany that you hate. It is yourselves as you will become, if the dreams of your munition-makers and gold-braid patriots are realized."

There is, of course, a purpose in this mode of thinking about the war, this mechanistic talk about the same people in different circumstances. It is revealed with Max Eastman's suggestion of a super-society, of patriotism and the way to manage it, of supra-nationalism and the way to end war. Like so many men whose temperateness seems almost a cause for reproach, who appear unconcerned in the face of struggle and agony, Max Eastman discloses himself as outside partisanship not because he is inhuman but because he sees no hope for humanity in making militancy the helmsman, sees hope for it only in directing that pugnacious energy inherent in mankind against mindless opponents incorrigibly unfriendly and lawless. He believes that an inseparable condition of the present war is nationalism,

that if people thought and felt supra-nationally, wars like the present one could not happen. Patriotism is egoism, we ought to hate it as a cause of war. Like other egoism, it is incurable. It inheres in human nature and comes out in the pseudo-organism of the nation. But it can be attached to a new unit, and we can alter the environment so as to remove the "occasions" of international war. "Offer that instinct of self-identification a larger group to which it may cling." You cannot root out patriotism but you ought to fix the "habit of loyalty" to a league, a union, a greater state. That state, drawn out of the disorder of nations to-day as the smaller state was drawn out of tribes and clans, is as yet only a promise and a hope. In spite of that, the abolition of war, the federation of the world, is "a matter of Christianity and good business." The wiser internationalist capitalists see it as such. And when they abolish war, with the aid of the socialist, "we can the more assiduously attend to our gentle crime of abolishing capitalism."

This is not inhuman. Compared with the intemperateness about Germany among the leisure class in America, it is the acme of humanity. It is, nevertheless, extraordinarily smug and condescending and bland. What one seeks in Max Eastman is not partisanship with either set of belligerents, much less an advocacy of fighting. Every one deplores the wastefulness of pugnacity. But one does seek an imaginative realization of the national beings and the human beings involved. The war is a hellish thing to have happen in Europe, a mad thing, a culpable, an atrocious. No one knows what will be the outcome for future international relations, so savage are the pas-

sions now seething. But the situation having arisen, whatever the selfish and sinister causes, it cannot be imaginatively conceived by an internationalist as if it were happening on Jupiter.

Max Eastman takes the attitude that the war is a sort of delirium tremens, a debauch, and "uninteresting." If man were born for socialism alone, to behave according to the presumptions of the socialists, that might be a pardonable way of taking the war. But however egregious the war may seem from the standpoint of systematization, it is not egregious so far as Frenchmen and Germans and Russians and Belgians and Austrians and Turks and Englishmen and seven other combatant governments are concerned. And as this fight is fought, self-identifications for the future will be decided. By the cement of blood men will establish many new political arrangements. To stand aside, therefore, and patronize the war, talk of it smoothly and smugly, is about as insufferable as it is for the ruling class to patronize poverty. If a man has any pretensions to public spirit he has not only to theorize for society. He has to take the public as it finds itself, not as he would prefer to have it. He cannot refuse to deal with it unless it behaves like a Little Lord Fauntleroy. It is a pose, of course, to say the war is uninteresting, but underneath the pose there is a sincere impatience with actuality, a contempt of facts for falling out as they do. To be in love with love is the sophomore's characteristic, to fail of love the moment the human object falls below one's expectation. Something of the same trait is exhibited in Max Eastman's relations to society. Because the war is distasteful he regards it as inconsequential.

He discusses it without genuine appreciation of its immediate throbbing problem and pain.

It comes, I suppose, from the excessive simplifications to which Max Eastman is prone. Knowing, as his note on Nietzsche shows, that it is silly to be too simple about egoism in human beings, he himself underestimates the difficulty of adjustment between national beings, though the Civil War in this country is such a terrific commentary on the prescription of a new "habit of loyalty." There is no system that can ensure the perfect relations of personalities, and nations are personalities as well as mechanisms, with "causes of war" on every side. To distribute the blame equally in the present instance, on the ground that both sides are human, is also too damnably simple. Germany is not a figment, neither is Russia, neither is England. Once before Germany had her individual will of Frenchmen, to the point of taxing them, and very nearly succeeded this second time. Such things are consequential for generations. They are, if you like, unpleasant — unpleasant as smallpox in the next street. But they aren't uninteresting. Only a pathologist who saw human beings exclusively as guinea pigs and had become bored with smallpox could afford to take that view. The pathologist, one may retort, appears inhuman merely because, like Max Eastman, he is curative by the wholesale rather than the retail. But there are symptoms in Max Eastman of the intellectualist who thinks that man exists for his theory rather than the theory for man.

Such intellectualism can be given an illustration. Only a while ago it was the fashion of socialists to

pooh-pooh patriotism. It did not fit in with the theory of the international solidarity of labor, and for that reason it was conveniently said and felt to be negligible. That fashion has passed. It is in line with a new maneuvre that Max Eastman should take patriotism with the seriousness already indicated. Patriotism is now one of the unalterable facts of human nature. The motive of patriotic fighting is now a native impulse of our constitutions. The backbone of the sentiment of patriotism is hereditary. Patriotism is incurable. It "is a fighting self-identification with the gang, the tribe, the nation. It is there in our human hearts forever." And so on. "This fact has been ignored by those immersed in the economic interpretation, because the instinctive nature of man was not discovered until after economics got well under way. But we might as well acknowledge it now."

Having authorized the "instinctive nature of man," Max Eastman explains the war with all too little trouble ("I have brought to the task the equipment of a psychologist").

> The causes of war are innumerable, but the underlying condition without which, no matter what causes arose, wars could neither begin nor continue, is that egregious fighting identification of self with a nation which is neither German nor English (nor even Irish) but a general human attribute. This is the thing we ought to be hating; instead we are cultivating it in ourselves by hating another nation.

If one had refused to defer to the "solidarity of labor," when it was in fashion, why should one now defer to this new psychological interpretation, equally

complete and equally bland? The "causes of war," in point of fact, are no easy matter to diagnose. The sublimation of nationalism may meet some of the causes, difficult as that sublimation will be to accomplish. But the problem is not simple, when one race can quite frankly profit by exterminating another, as the white race profited by exterminating the red, and when one government can quite frankly plot to betray another into war, as Bismarck's Germany plotted to "do up" France. These things do not fit into formulas. They ought not to be glibly explained.

There is this, however, to be said in favor of Max Eastman's Understanding Germany; an extreme rationalism about Germany is serviceable in an America that is filled with empty cant about the war.

There is a kind of human being who anatomically resembles a sausage, all meat and very thin as to the skin. That is the kind of human being who most of all wants the Japanese hustled to the trenches and the United States to declare war on Hoboken, who is willing to have the war last forever so that he can retain his peace of body. He sits in gloom because Germany is not yet beaten. Germany afflicts him as something indigestible might afflict him, something that upsets the place where he really lives.

When you consider that the world is full of such people as this, the German and the English world as well as the American, you hesitate to criticize anyone who has the clean, amazing temperateness of Max Eastman. You realize that such antiseptic thinking as Max Eastman's has fineness and rareness, that it is beyond the capacity of most people even to initiate, and beyond all but a very few to sustain. The world in which Max Eastman lives is

so different from the blind forest of grunting and rooting vitalities that the mere reminder of it is a final criticism of lives which proceed without vision. You have to dissociate your own criticism of Max Eastman from those criticisms that would be the result of enragement. Once you do it, however, you may say that his vision of the war is, like most visions, open to certain objections. To put those objections intelligently is not easy. It is not easy to discriminate against any man who aims at detachment without feeding the base prejudices that pick up every partisan word. But there are too few Max Eastmans in the United States to have his vision of the war presented without venturing one's estimate of it, whatever the risk of pleasing the obtuse.

January 13, 1917.

BEYOND PATRIOTISM

AMERICANS have known for some time that the English philosopher Bertrand Russell came into conflict with his government because of his lectures and has been repudiated by his university and restricted in his civil liberties. What this has meant not many Americans have inquired. Some have said: England is at war. Bertrand Russell is in conflict with the authorities. The authorities may not know much about philosophy, but they probably know what is best. If they don't, it is too bad, but Bertrand Russell must put up with it. You can't expect such luxuries as "freedom of speech" in time of war.

The most famous of stories deals with a lofty imperial judge who exhibited the inadequacy of the law. The inadequacy of the law is a twice-told tale. But no one, not the clerks of sacred legend or the masters of corrective comedy, not Rabelais or Swift or Voltaire or Heine or Ibsen or Shaw or Anatole France, has ever done complete justice to the gift of humanity for misunderstanding, to the irony of smallness in power. Authority insists on reverence. Authority in the person of some frantic abortioner asks for universal humble acquiescence as he proceeds to his act of abortion. This is the bitter extravaganza to which generation after generation has been invited, for which docility is inculcated and etiquette arranged. As if authority had never robed

Why Men Fight, by Bertrand Russell. Century Co., New York.

itself to embody hate and fear, men who would never stoop to infamy themselves readily align themselves with legalized infamy. And they do not even suspect their own dishonor.

It is a good deal to ask of anyone in wartime, even of an American who is three thousand miles from the slaughter, to employ his sense of justice. But the sense of humor, if not the sense of justice, is absolutely required in Bertrand Russell's case. Here is a human being who has brought to the consideration of the war an intellect of extraordinary scrupulousness, an imagination penetrated with consciousness of human values, a broad and serious sense of responsibility, a complete emancipation from personal motives and a complete independence of class and party and creed. He is not a person of any dubious ethnic origin. He is not an unstable Celt or materialist Jew or lamentable Hindu. If a man's pedigree as an Englishman had to be tattooed on him, Bertrand Russell's could have been tattooed from memory by any one of a hundred country-house beldames. He is as English as cricket. He did not care for his country, it is true, the way Lord Northcliffe cares for it, the way William Randolph Hearst cares for this country. Nor did he propose to give free rein to his beloved country, leaving it to its dear devices, the way New Englanders gave free rein to their indulged New York, New Haven and Hartford. Bertrand Russell loved his country but not as if it were a Joss, a thing of profit, or a slut. He did not accept the same relation to it that inquisitors once accepted to their religion, that mountaineers do to their moonshining, that peasants do to their Black Hand. In the hour when many sim-

pler men flung themselves under the Juggernaut of patriotism, Bertrand Russell felt true patriotism to be the control, the guidance, the sublimation of that tremendous sacrificial impulse. He saw his countrymen go to war and he knew it was for their common country. That he could not prevent. But the consequences of their blind heroic impulse, its bearing on the world in which his country would have to continue to function, he was bound by every law of his nature to estimate, for very love of England if for nothing else.

It is possible that all the lectures to which the British government took exception are not contained in Why Men Fight. Considering the nature of those that are included, however, and the quality of man they exemplify, the official misunderstanding is established. It is easy to see what a wartime government, any wartime government, requires. It requires its philosophers to fall in with the tribe, to bellow when the ringleader bellows, to shout "atrocity" or "barbarian" or "democracy" in chorus, to wear warpaint and dance around the ring. It is not merely the Haeckels and the Euckens of whom this is expected, it is expected of French and of English philosophers in a similar spirit. And if, to the honor of England, a philosopher refuses to abandon the realities that he deems ultimate not only for himself but for his nation, there is a howl of anger from the mob, subservient clamor from every perjured intellectual, a decree by government that gives to silly prejudice the intonation of high loyalty, the intonation of the voice of God.

Those who are out of the mêlée may sympathize with the trials of officialdom. The crisis is harrow-

ing. About the merits of Bertrand Russell's attitude, however, it would be final delinquency to close one's mind. It matters a good deal that the British government should not be unnecessarily hampered during the conduct of a merciless war. But everything depends upon what one means by "hampered." There are Germans who demand that in the conduct of a merciless war they should not be hampered by neutrals, should not be hampered by any sort of criterion normally deemed "human." When, on this frantically patriotic principle, the Germans sank the Lusitania, few disinterested people agreed with them. Yet when another kind of logicality is resisted by Bertrand Russell, the logicality of blind submission to the state, of reciprocal animosity, of national egoism, of war-fever and destructiveness and cynicism, he is confronted by the argument that he is "hampering" his country, and he is muzzled like a dog. And just because certain Americans want England to win, at any cost, this intellectual von Tirpitzism does not shock them. They have arrived at the stage where any fool who cries "victory" or "patriotism" or "loyalty" seems wiser than the sage who cannot take such slag as his nation's spiritual fuel.

To read Why Men Fight with any sympathy is to be entranced by the honesty, the concentration, the intelligence, the equilibrium of its author. He is the kind of man, I have no doubt, in whom the war disclosed to himself a whole set of false presumptions about the nature of human character and the possibilities of reasonableness and the chance of avoidance of conflict and giving pain. "It would be better a hundredfold," he was driven to exclaim even recently, "to forego material comfort, power,



pomp, and outward glory than to kill and be killed, to hate and be hated, to throw away in a mad moment of fury the bright heritage of ages." That is a bias of his nature which it would be dishonest not to recognize. But it is not a bias that decides the character of his thinking. That thinking has made a place for everything the war has had to offer him. It has made a place for the obvious aggressiveness of Germany, for the reasonableness of preparing to meet that aggressiveness, for the exaltation of patriotism, for the impossibility of passive pacificism. Everything spiritual in him may have been crucified by the war. One supposes this to be the case by reason of the tensions of his thinking. But he has had such vigor and health of mind that he could meet this terrific spiritual crisis without quailing, without shirking, without recanting. If one were looking for a truth-lover in the present crisis, indeed, one could find few as great as Bertrand Russell. "Men fear thought," he says in his chapter on education, "as they fear nothing else on earth — more than ruin, more even than death. Thought is subversive and revolutionary, destructive and terrible; thought is merciless to privilege, established institutions, and comfortable habits; thought is anarchic and lawless, indifferent to authority, careless of the well tried wisdom of the ages. Thought looks into the pit of hell and is not afraid. It sees man, a feeble speck, surrounded by unfathomable depths of silence; yet it bears itself proudly, as unmoved as if it were lord of the universe. Thought is great and swift and free, the light of the world, and the chief glory of man." One imagines that this pæan burst from him after his own experience

in the pit of hell, after he fought through to some understanding of the war.

In order to understand the war Bertrand Russell had to overhaul his universe. He might have chosen between his country and Germany, and called that "understanding" the war. He might have taken a Henry Ford view, child-like pity for the "boys" in the trenches. He might have attempted realistic politics. He might have remained a sheer pacifist, blaming a mysterious "system" and standing aside. Any one of a hundred schemes of explanation might have sustained him, but all his life he had gone back of the ostensible, gone into the hinterland of human nature, to see if something that did not ask him to shut off candor and speculation could be summoned for his guidance about life. And by examining the springs of men's preferences during this struggle, the sources of action, the bases of behavior, he picked up clue after clue to the passions that were wheeling around him and spinning his senses with every turn. He picked up clues that enabled him not merely to revise but to reckon, to bring the reeling panorama into focus, to attain a comprehension that meant neither starvation for his tribal loyalties nor suffocation in the squalors of partisanship.

It is this comprehension that Mr. Russell's colleagues of Cambridge University and the small-brained censorship were afraid of. They were afraid to see their cause taken out of the hothouse of propaganda and exposed to fresh air. And yet what had they to fear? It is true that Mr. Russell believes in the principle of growth. He does not think that private landlordism is good for the citizenship as a whole. He thinks that conscientious

parents find it very expensive to bring up babies, and that they will go on exercising birth-control until the state faces this economic factor in population. He thinks that the monarchical organization of industry must be swept away. He thinks the present systems of education in Germany and France and America are subservient to privilege and narrow patriotism. He thinks that many women find motherhood unsatisfying, that the romantic movement was bad in putting too much emphasis on personal love and that some sort of "infinite purpose" must be shared by people in marriage if they are to develop. He thinks illicit love is unsatisfactory. He does not entirely agree with the socialists or the pragmatists or the labor leaders or the imperialists or the bishops. He does not regard the diminution of poverty as anything more than a preface to politics. He sees danger in labor's attitude toward thought. He criticizes religion and marriage and war and property and education in their character as political institutions, and he criticizes the great state for the multiple opportunities it offers to corrupt and ambitious and ruthless men, and its disadvantages for democracy. But while many of his criticisms are unsparing, none of them is devious or poisoned. The principles of democracy and liberty are frankly and utterly his principles. And nothing but a barren conception of these quite insistent questions, a tremulous regard for property and the church and every other establishment, could have led England to restrict and handicap him.

It is not that Bertrand Russell is an impossiblist. "In spite of all the destruction which is wrought by the impulses that lead to war," he avows, "there is

more hope for a nation which has these impulses than for a nation in which all impulse is dead." Mr. Russell is not Chinafied. Nor is he a person of mere intellect, a fish. "Mind, in its dealings with instinct, is *merely* critical: so far as instinct is concerned, the unchecked activity of the mind is apt to be destructive and to generate cynicism. Spirit is an antidote to the cynicism of the mind: it universalizes the emotions that spring from instinct, and by universalizing them makes them impervious to mental criticism." The claims of the spirit have Mr. Russell's full and free acknowledgment. Where he differs from the partisan is simply in the price he is willing to pay to keep men from going to the shambles, in the accent he lays on such words as honor and self-respect and national pride. He understands perfectly well that the enemy has to be fought, as the fighting insect has to be crushed. But he knows that to exterminate that insect he must eventually drain marshes, not use lotions and build screens.

Many passages in Why Men Fight indicate that Mr. Russell is neither omniscient nor entirely consistent. He seems to dispose of incompatibilities easily, and yet to demand radical changes, "if the world is to be saved." He is aware of diplomatic iniquities such as occurred in Persia, and yet he has great hope of super-legal arrangements based on the claimants' force. Granted that he is vulnerable, if not in these in other respects, the fact remains that he has reached the height for large survey of this war. It is not an altitude of rhetoric or evangelical spirit. It is the angle for penetrating vision. He accepts man as he is, nationalism, industrialism, civilization. On that basis, candidly, searchingly, commodiously,

he entertains the problem of the war. If he declines to believe that blind patriotic impulses give the answer it is not because he is unpatriotic. There are in himself the deep sources of patriotism. But he cares too much for his country not to remind it of mankind.

February 3, 1917.

DOMESTICATING MARS

ONE ought to be a Rip Van Winkle to get the full effect of Mr. Perry's book. It marks a change in American attitude which only one who could exclude recent events might properly estimate. Ten years ago there was about as much sentiment in this country for compulsory military service as there is at this moment for compulsory child-bearing. Compulsory military service was an expedient that simply did not enter the calculations of the ordinary American. Great hopes could be entertained of the Swiss initiative and the Swiss referendum, but the Swiss army scheme seemed as little appropriate to the United States as the United States navy scheme would be to Switzerland. Conscription was a specialty of continental Europe as remote from this country as monarchy itself. There was not so much a sentiment against it as a general assumption that it was alien, archaic, illiberal, inconceivable. And now, out of the thick of a sophisticated society, a Harvard professor argues "universal" military service with every indication of representing a definite body of American opinion. It is the kind of change for which only a huge subversive experience can account.

Why does Mr. Perry support the cause of conscription? To read his articles innocently, one might suppose that universal military duty recommended

The Free Man and the Soldier, by Ralph Barton Perry. Scribners, New York.

itself to him on the ground that it was the "democratic" method of providing security for the country. He argues the case for it on this plausible score, as also on the score of its educational and social advantages. But the merits of universal military service, precisely the same ten years ago as they are to-day, are necessarily Mr. Perry's afterthoughts. If it were not for the European war, and for one special circumstance of it, it is practically certain that he would no more ask for compulsory soldiering than for compulsory road-making or scavenging or butchering or fire-extinguishing. A "democracy implies that there shall be neither privilege nor immunity," he urges earnestly. But privilege and immunity are saving most of us from the uglier chores every day. It is not reasoning like this that led Mr. Perry to come to a belief in compulsory service. He came to it above all, one seems to see, because he accepted America's "genuine peril," the "hazard of war." The upset of the balance of power in Europe has torn most American minds from their moorings. What security can there be in a world where such a thing can happen? And what is the good of living in a world where things can be so insecure? The behavior of the Germans, in particular, seems to convince Mr. Perry of the necessity for being prepared. He usually couches his phrases this way: "The scale and the method of modern warfare make universal training not only an appropriate means, but an indispensable means." But he is really apprehending wanton invasion. The Germans deliberately let hell loose in Europe and it is through the light of this appalling and infamous fact that Mr. Perry sees military possibilities and calculates international affairs.

He does not say so directly but all through his book, on pp. 12, 34, 56, 62, 65, 136, 145, he betrays the shock that the Germans dealt to his universe, and he infers from their action a definite hateful danger. It is a condition, he seems to say, and not a theory that confronts us: we are dealing here with the kind of evil willfulness that we must either obey or destroy. There are forces of destruction in the world which "must be met, each according to its kind, by the forces of deliverance." And he seems only sorry that the United States had not its forces of deliverance available in 1914 to enter the European war. "We cannot afford to cherish any ideal whatsoever unless at the same time we are willing to put forth the effort that is commensurate with its realization." And that effort may well be military. "There is no fair escape from the tragic paradox that man must destroy in order to save."

The neutralism and non-resistance of pacifists impels Mr. Perry to emphasize the rôle of force. Force is justifiable in its war on lawlessness. "It is provident and constructive in its ulterior effect." "With this principle in mind," he continues, "we may now take a further step and justify offensive war, when undertaken in the interest of an international system or league of humanity." "Strength without high purpose is soulless and brutal; purpose without strength is unreal and impotent." For the accomplishment of civilization, in fact, "it becomes necessary to use the harsh and dangerous instruments by which things are done in this world. Civilization is not saved by the mere purging of one's heart, but by the work of one's hands."

Once Mr. Perry conceives of war by his own coun-

try as inevitably war on lawlessness he can easily wave aside the foible of "conscientiousness." In wartime a citizen who does not approve of the war must bide his time.

If his conscience is offended, so much the worse for his conscience. What he needs is a new conscience which will teach him to keep the faith with his fellows until such time as their common understanding and their controlling policy shall have been modified. The man who refuses to obey the law or play the game because he has been outvoted is more likely to be afflicted with peevishness or egotism than exalted by heroism.

Granted the peril of war and the virtue of one's country, this is clearly the way to talk. One must emphasize, however, that it is exactly the way Germans have talked, and created terror by doing so. They have said to Liebknecht: "So much the worse for your conscience!" How is it that a brave and patriotic Harvard professor should so simply follow the German example, so simply dwell on the problem of asserting righteousness, so little dwell on the anterior problem of ascertaining it? He does not mention an "iron ring" that threatens to choke us, but he does insist on "lawlessness" in other nations, and, with an extraordinary faith in the efficacy of force, does think of it as our means — our chief means — of furthering high international purposes. A sainthood on our side, a dragon on the other, he nerves our sainthood to the need of gouging the dragon. For that purpose he wants us universally trained to kill.

At base it is a fine impulse that forces Mr. Perry to consider war as an American possibility. The

phenomenon of the jingo has nothing to do with him — and indeed the jingo, the undeveloped man who wants his country to bully other countries, is too scared to peep at present. Mr. Perry is neither maudlin nor melodramatic. He is simply resolute about facing what he conceives to be a newly conditioned world, a world in which hateful facts present themselves, regardless of the facts we prefer. Life, as he sees it, contains an unsuspected range of inimical possibilities, unsuspected threats to security. He is prepared to accept those threats and to pay a price for insuring against them.

A man must be brave to counter Mr. Perry by minimizing the practical danger of war. He is bound, in the first place, to be sure he is not evasive in circumstances where it is supremely natural to evade. At the end of Hedda Gabler Brack is actually in the room when Hedda shoots herself, but so unforeseen, so unwelcome, is her act, he exclaims that these things don't happen. Thus works the diaphragm of habit. When the doctor says, "You have cancer," you do not believe him. You want to close your eyes and then wake up out of your dream into a world still humane. When the man near you shouts, "The boat is going down," you want to hit him. The awful, unescapable fact provides such unmerited suffering that you feel entitled to deny it. The notion of justice persists in the teeth of everything, even resorts to a theory of "compensation" and poses a mysterious Handicapper who has a "benign" intention at the bottom of it all. To ward anguish from our nerves is automatic. It is therefore all too easy to substitute preference for observation, or to act the ostrich. And only those who are

born with a noble capacity for reality can let anguish touch their nerves without sealing their minds.

Something of this capaciousness for unwelcome experience, I believe, and something of transfiguring patriotism, inform Mr. Ralph Barton Perry's attitude toward the war. The readjustment of American society which he proposes is so great, however, that before assenting to it one must be sure that normal pacific experience has really been subverted, and that compulsory service is the price to pay for peace. Such, certainly, does not seem to me to be the case. And one seeks in vain in Mr. Perry's book for two essential points. First, a demonstration that it is not Mr. Perry's own inexperience in the ways of foreign policy and European states that causes the German act to look so monstrous. Second, a demonstration that Mr. Perry has considered the army and navy establishment in relation to geography and the rest. Unless a man is informed on these points, he is in danger of making false analogies, perhaps the greatest danger that partial sophistication involves.

It is as a philosopher, however, that Mr. Perry is most to be criticized. He can best be criticized in his own words. Because his patriotism has been violently stimulated by Germany's aggression, he concludes that we must be expedient. Perhaps he suspects himself of a squeamishness that might endanger his country. He will not flabbily vacillate, procrastinate, contemplate. He will lift his eyes from his navel. Grim business is afoot. A condition, not a theory, has arisen and he will hold himself ready to lend a hand. But "the practical man," he says himself, "is always confronted by a condition. I shall suggest presently that every condition does in truth

involve a theory; but if so, the practical man ignores it. . . . His problem is the comparatively narrow and simple problem of finding the instrument to fit the occasion and achieve the result."

This is just the point about war. It is a platitude that inoffensiveness cannot solve life, and most of us will agree to destroy rather than be destroyed. But it is mad to say, "to be effective in this world is to hazard a judgment and to commit oneself to it." When men tremble on the brink of a bestial wastefulness like warfare — men who on both sides possess impulses, as Mr. Perry says, but are not possessed by them — the determining fact may be, and ought to be, their estimate of the savagery and dispensability of war. A philistine may not feel this. He may insist that "the work of civilization is to make the right also *mighty*, so that it may obtain among men and prevail." But there are such objections to war in itself, to the temper preceding it, the brutality it releases, the "butcher's bills," the wounds it poisons, that a philosopher's position should much rather be one that keeps these things in mind than one that gilds with "higher purposes" and "qualities of idealism" mankind's most obvious of hideous lapses. It takes two to keep the peace, but the peace is a basic desideratum, and Mr. Perry is far too much concerned about America's direct interests as against enemies than about her working for the terms on which the world can keep friends.

Short-range practicality, says Mr. Perry, "means a readiness to meet the immediate occasion as is dictated by the momentary desire. Such practicality is a perpetual meeting of emergencies. It is a sort of living from hand to mouth, an uninspired and

unillumined opportunism. That which is ordinarily condemned as unpractical, and which *is* unpractical from this *narrow* standpoint, may now be called long-range practicality. That is to say, it is that prevision, that thorough intellectual equipment, that wisdom as to the ultimate and comparative worth of things, without which there can be no security nor any confirming sense of genuine achievement. It is that which makes the difference between making a fool of oneself, however, earnestly and even successfully, and living in a manner which would be able to endure the test of time."

These words of Mr. Perry are severe, but they apply with astonishing directness to The Free Man and the Soldier. It is a courageous and loyal book, but it is marred by short-range practicality. Death is beyond words preferable to losing liberty, honor or self-respect. This Mr. Perry is valiant enough to see. What he fails to see is the loss of liberty, honor and self-respect involved in every war that could be avoided. If he saw this more clearly, he might plan more for security by ways of understanding rather than ways of force.

September 9, 1916.

THE COST OF PEACE

COMPARATIVELY few people know the work of Thorstein Veblen. Some thousands have read his best-known book, the brilliant, drastic Theory of the Leisure Class; but only a few hundred have read his Theory of Business Enterprise, his Instinct of Workmanship and his Imperial Germany. So little is he known that a pretentious man the other day met my mention of The Nature of Peace by saying: "Ah, of course, a new translation." He did not know that Thorstein Veblen was an American, was graduated from an American university, in the eighties, and has been teaching in American universities ever since. Mr. Veblen is an American writer but the kind of American writer whose merit is rather more clearly recognized abroad than at home, an American who ought to have been a foreigner to be appreciated in America.

To read Mr. Veblen is not and cannot be an entertainment. There is a kind of fashionable lady who knows precisely when a literary Paquin has ceased to be the thing, and who twitters as unfailingly as any bird at the first breath of another master's dawn. For all this turn for novelty, few ladies have twittered much or are ever going to twitter much about Mr. Veblen's performance. He is too difficult to understand. It is hard intellectual labor to

An Inquiry into the Nature of Peace and the Terms of Its Perpetuation, by Thorstein Veblen. Macmillan, New York.

read any of his books, and to skim him is impossible. He is not a luxurious valley of easy reading, a philosophic Tennyson. He is a mountain — stubborn, forbidding, purgatorial. There is no funicular to bring him under subjection of the indolent, and sometimes there is barely a foothold even for the hardy amid the tortuosities of his style. But the reward for those who do persist in reading him is commensurate with the effort. No mountain pierces to heaven, not even Mr. Veblen's, but the area that he unrolls is strategically chosen and significantly inclusive. Part of the reward of reading him may be like the reward of mountain-climbing itself, the value of tough exercise for its own sake, but unless Mr. Veblen created the conviction that his large purposes did reasonably necessitate intricate and laborious processes of thought and that such processes had to be followed in detail in order that his argument might be mastered, no one would be quite satisfied to take the pains he exacts. The greatest justification of such pains is the final sense conveyed by him that he has had a singular contribution to make, and has made it with complete regard to the formidable requirements of responsible unconventional utterance.

The responsible unconventionality of Mr. Veblen has never been better exemplified than in this new book of his, finished February, 1917, on the nature of peace. It is, so far as I know, the most momentous work in English on the encompassment of lasting peace. There are many books that aim to give geographic domicile to the kind of tinkered peace that is likely to come out of this war, but I know of no book that gives so plain and positive account of the terms " on which peace at large may be hopefully

installed and maintained," and I know of no discussion so searching as to " what if anything there is in the present situation that visibly makes for a realization of these necessary terms within a calculable future." Those who are acquainted with Mr. Veblen's work are aware of the ironic inscrutability of his manner, the detachment that is at once an evidence of his impartiality and an intimation of his corrosive skepticism. It may no longer be said, with The Nature of Peace under examination, that either impartiality or skepticism induces Mr. Veblen to withhold his preference, to conceal his bias, in the present contingency. That bias, however, does not lead him into any of the current patriotic extravagances. If critical acid can corrode the patriotic conceptions of " democracy " and " liberty " that are now so familiar, Mr. Veblen makes no attempt to keep such fancies from being eaten into. What is left, however, is sufficiently substantial to give him the issue that abides in the war, and its bearing on peace, and it provides him with his clue to the great eventuality, " the consequences presumably due to follow."

It would be wrong in any review of Mr. Veblen to give a mere bald outline of the work that is so full of his manifold mind. There are so many " patent imbecilities " (like the protective tariff), so many current egregious practices (like business men's sabotage), that receive characteristic illumination in transit, the bare colorless statement of his conclusions would completely leave out the poignancy that accumulates as he proceeds. His conclusions are, on the other hand, impressive enough to indicate the importance of the argument back of them, and if

only for their suggestion of the massive argument they need to be reported. Defeat for the German-Imperial coalition, not victory for the Entente belligerents, is the first step toward lasting peace that he recognizes, because of the decisive difference "between those people whose patriotic affections centre about the fortunes of an impersonal commonwealth and those in whom is superadded a fervent aspiration for dynastic ascendancy." Peace on terms of Germany's unconditional surrender is not discussed by Mr. Veblen on the basis of likelihood but on the basis of its desirability in relation to the chances for peace, and the unlikelihood of lasting peace in its absence. But this is not the ordinary orgiastic contemplation of an enemy destroyed. The elements in Germany that conspire against lasting peace are carefully computed, and the terms of their disintegration discussed in every detail. It is by no means forgotten that if the victorious side is not "shorn over the comb of neutralization and democracy" there can in any event be no prospect of perpetuating peace.

The present unfitness of Germany (or Japan) for lasting peace is ascribed by Mr. Veblen to the essential dynastic need for warlike enterprise, but he has no hesitation whatever in declaring in regard to the Allied Powers that peace in general demands the "relinquishment of all those undemocratic institutional survivals out of which international grievances are wont to arise." This is not the customary emphasis of good-will pacifists. They are fain to propose peace on the present basis of "national jealousies and discriminations" and what Mr. Veblen in his highly personal jargon calls "discrepancies." Mr. Veblen alludes to the League to Enforce Peace

as a movement for the "collusive safeguarding of national discrepancies for force of arms." This toleration of existing nationalisms Mr. Veblen plainly regards as an insuperable obstacle to peace. He exposes in every detail the predisposition to war that inheres in nationalisms. "What the peace-makers might logically be expected to concern themselves about would be the elimination of these discrepancies that make for embroilment."

The military defeat of Germany seems to the author a requisite step on the direct path to peace. This is only because Germany is dynastic, however, and the German people subservient to the dynasty. One of the issues most thoroughly debated by Mr. Veblen is the pregnant issue of German democratization, and while he lays great stress on the necessity for military defeat as a first requirement of democratization he does not believe the disintegrating of Germany's dynastic "second nature" is of so hopeless a character as its historic persistence might imply. There is no complacency in the attitude that leads him to regard imperial Germany (or imperial Japan) as a stumbling-block in the road to lasting peace. It is an attitude founded on a strict and even solicitous estimate of the patent German and Japanese aims. And in so far as a peace policy involves treatment of the German people Mr. Veblen is quite certain that no trade discrimination against them, necessarily bound to recoil on the common people, would be pacifically effective or justifiable. The persecution of the German common people could take no form that would conceivably advance the cause of peace, and Mr. Veblen is careful to dissociate his belief that Germany should be beaten from

the belief that the people of Germany should be made to suffer for their differentiation after the war.

Where The Nature of Peace seems to me to rise far and away above the current discussions of supernationalism is in its comparative freedom from unanalyzed conceptions. There is nothing sacred to Mr. Veblen in the conception of patriotism, of property, of success, of manliness, of good breeding, of national honor, of prestige. The notion of nonresistance has no terrors for him — he writes a chapter on its merits. But so dry is he that it is only one reading him attentively who will gather his extraordinarily subversive character, his invincible mind. The blessedness of this unsparing intelligence is so great that one has a constant acute pleasure in pursuing Mr. Veblen's argument. If one had long perceived for oneself, for example, that "business" means waste and inefficiency, it is pleasant to have Mr. Veblen introduce the same perceptions, but when he proceeds to locate them in his spacious understanding of the whole international problem, and to reveal their unquestionable bearing on the alternatives of war and peace, one has a happy consciousness of coming honestly to a wider and deeper view of realities. This is the supreme gift of Mr. Veblen's disinterested inquiry.

The notion that a lasting peace is compatible with the established patriotic order of things, with the status of the gentleman in England or the business man in the United States, is not entertained for one moment by Mr. Veblen, and regardless of the "maggoty conceit of national domination" which demands "the virtual erasure of the Imperial dynasty," he sees an impediment to peace in the dear

establishments of "upperclass and pecuniary control" in the allied commonwealths. Chief and foremost in the pacific arrangement must come "a considerable degree of neutralization, extending to virtually all national interests and pretensions, but more particularly to all material and commercial interests of the federated peoples; and, indispensably and especially, such neutralization would have to extend to the nations from whom aggression is now apprehended, as, e.g., the German people." All manner of trade discrimination has to be abolished —"import, export and excise tariff, harbor and registry dues, subsidy, patent right, copyright, trade mark, tax exemption whether partial or exclusive, investment preferences at home and abroad." Besides this prescription for "the elimination of discrepancies that make for embroilment," a neutralization of citizenship is also indicated, the common man standing to lose nothing by these revisions. But Mr. Veblen is frank to say that "this prospect of consequences" points to a general revolution.

It has appeared in the course of the argument that the preservation of the present pecuniary law and order, with all its incidents of ownership and investment, is incompatible with an unwarlike state of peace and security. This current scheme of investment, business, and sabotage, should have an appreciably better chance of survival in the long run if the present conditions of warlike preparation and national insecurity were maintained, or if the projected peace were left in a somewhat problematical state, sufficiently precarious to keep national animosities alert, and thereby to the neglect of domestic interests, particularly of such interests as touch the popular well-being. On the other hand, it has also appeared that the cause of peace and its perpetuation might be materially advanced if precautions were taken beforehand

to put out of the way as much as may be of those discrepancies of interest and sentiment between nations and between classes which make for dissension and eventual hostilities.

The weight of these phrases it is not easy to catch in passing, but nothing more significant has been written since the outbreak of the war. One has only to go back to The Theory of Business Enterprise, published in 1903, to learn how Mr. Veblen foresaw this war, and America's participation in it. The same rigor of intellectual standard that gave him a command of the situation at that time is discernible in this present volume, and gives him dominance now. Such severity of mind as Mr. Veblen exhibits is not likely to win him many readers, but the recommendation of Mr. Veblen is not merely the recommendation of a great philosopher of industrialism. It is not his relentless logic alone that elevates him. It is the democratic bias which The Nature of Peace indicates.

May 26, 1917.

UNDER FIRE

IN the presence of this book one is in the presence of the fact. It is known to all of us that where humanity is at grips with its own destiny it is the habit of men to lie. The great finalities are always concealed from us in their full gravity and terror — the finalities of birth, of love, of death. And because they are concealed from us, with the zeal of the frightened savage that is in all of us, we go from catastrophe to catastrophe as numb as fools. Only occasionally, against the instinct of the savage that bids us sprinkle holy water and burn incense and heap flowers, does a man arrive who accepts his naked destiny and insists on its actual nature against every kind of incantation. Such a man, confronted by war, is Henri Barbusse, the Parisian journalist who incorporates his whole experience in this book.

It is unnecessary to have been at the front to judge of M. Barbusse's veracity. One does not need to have killed a woman to accept Crime and Punishment. Under Fire, as the sensitive translation is called, impresses its veracity in revealing its saturation with the war. There are other experiences of the war, as there are other men, but this is invincibly complete. It is a book that is no more to be questioned than the diary of Captain Scott or the deathless pages of Tolstoy. It composes the war for our

Under Fire, by Henri Barbusse. Translated by Fitzwater Wray. Dutton, New York.



understanding, making us familiar at the beginning with the men who are going to die, initiating us into trench life before the charge is launched over the top, ending the book in a supreme symbolism. But the wise composition that unites Under Fire is no more artificial than the due supervision of words as they stream from one's own brain to the pen-point. The facts have been disposed, even as a pointillist disposes colors, only to keep them true.

Against the tale that M. Barbusse has told there is the conspiracy of a thousand conventions. He is a Frenchman fighting for France, la belle France, in what many consider the last extremity of her effort to remain a "first-class" power. To sustain that effort it is vital, even if untruth is required, to give a good account of the organization of the army and its esprit. Not only should he define favorably the motives that inspire the soldier but he should show the happy democratic relations that exist between soldier and officer, the satisfaction of the soldier with the general staff and his comprehension of the plans of the army, the joyous reception that awaits him on leave of absence, the self-immolation of the civilians in touch with the army, the honesty of contractors, the sad reluctance of brilliant young men not permitted to fight in the trenches, the evil behavior of the enemy, the heroism of the war. Of the more obvious conventions these are a few, but more subtle conventions abound as to personal attitude. A good patriot is not supposed to tell the world of filth, of lice, of corpses in ridiculous attitudes, of bad food, of muck in language, of bloodshed sought and enjoyed. If a man tells these things or breathes a word contrary to the unanimity of national purpose,

he is treasonable. The facts are of no consequence. The impossibility of keeping them suppressed is of no consequence. If the sun rises on a national delinquency or ineptitude, it is the sun that is treasonable. From the guns of such a conspiracy M. Barbusse is also under fire.

But when one has faced machine-guns, it appears, it is not impossible to face machine-minds. One can feel in M. Barbusse a disdain for those feeble men of Europe who, within boundaries insisted upon by themselves, brought about a war that is the crashing bankruptcy of all their theories, all their pretensions, their idols, their sanctity. With demonology their last resource in order to strengthen once again the political boundaries that intensify differences in language and custom, they ask M. Barbusse to take his mind from the actuality he has experienced, and disregard the war as a harvest of their statesmanship. But the author of Under Fire is too sure of war not to be sure of something about peace which is more than non-war. He is for peace, not a peace that will save his own skin now but a peace that will be embodied in the plans of a society which takes full stock of its own bestiality, its own madness.

It is not the picturesque beginning of this book that lets one see M. Barbusse the accusant of war. He is content at the beginning to give us the mucky trench, the rag-bag cave-dwellers who are his comrades, the Falstaffian humor of their masculinity, the jocularity that is the jewel in the toad. The first chapter is called In the Earth; it is properly named. It is earthy in its jests at the old territorials who straggle by, " worn-out and trench-foul veterans "; earthy in its grim silence at the passing Africans,



eyes "like balls of ivory or onyx"; earthy in its sneers for the penmen who visit the trench. The first glimmerings of the seriousness of battle are not utterly somber. "The smell of fresh blood was enough to bring your heart up," but that is from glad men "whom the depths of horror have given back." The impression is allowed to accumulate fairly and steadily. There is Eudoxie, the ethereal girl pursued by an oaf. There is the dizzying complexity of a great army entraining. There is the little soldier bereft, by an accident of the mails, from his week's reunion with his wife. The misery of cold Fouillade, imprisoned by his pennilessness in a wet barn, dreaming of his scented Pyrenees — this is one episode of those remissions from fighting which are described in keen detail. The most eloquent tells of that stolen journey into occupied territory on which Poterloo got home — to see Clotilde through the window, smiling by the side of a Boche officer, "not a forced smile, not a debtor's smile, non, a real smile that came from *her*, that she gave." It is on an adventure with Poterloo, to seek somewhere for a trace of his house in the eviscerated countryside, that the tocsin begins to sound. Just as at lovely seaside places one sometimes, a little inland, comes on a spot made foul by the heaped refuse of the settlement, so Poterloo and the narrator pass through the spot where is heaped the human refuse of the fight. There are pages here, honorable pages, nobly painful, that it would be sacrilege to quote. It is at this point, perhaps, with the disaster to Poterloo, that one is gripped by the inhuman remorselessness of all too human device.

No description of bombardment surpasses M.

Barbusse's, even in translation. And no description of going forward, so it seems to me, can equal his chapter Under Fire. To quote from it is unfair. It is like giving one stilled picture of a terrific movement. But there is a glimpse of the author's total attitude in the following passage that demands its inclusion:

"What are they doing, those chaps?"—"It's to climb up by."

We are ready. The men marshal themselves, still silently, their blankets crosswise, the helmet-straps on the chin, leaning on their rifles. I look at their pale, contracted, and reflective faces. They are not soldiers, they are men. They are not adventurers, or warriors, or made for human slaughter, neither butchers nor cattle. They are laborers and artisans whom one recognizes in their uniforms. They are civilians uprooted, and they are ready. They await the signal for death or murder; but you may see, looking at their faces between the vertical gleams of their bayonets, that they are simply men.

Each one knows that he is going to take his head, his chest, his belly, his whole body, and all naked, up to the rifles pointed forward, to the shells, to the bombs piled and ready, and above all to the methodical and almost infallible machine-guns — to all that is waiting for him yonder and is now so frightfully silent — before he reaches the other soldiers that he must kill. They are not careless of their lives, like brigands, nor blinded by passion like savages. In spite of the doctrines with which they have been cultivated they are not inflamed. They are above instinctive excesses. They are not drunk, either physically or morally. It is in full consciousness, as in full health and full strength, that they are massed there to hurl themselves once more into that sort of madman's part imposed on all men by the madness of the human race. One sees the thought and the fear and the farewell that there is in their silence, their still-

nss, in the mask of tranquillity which unnaturally grips their faces. They are not the kind of hero one thinks of, but their sacrifice has greater worth than they who have not seen them will ever be able to understand.

Only by such profound acceptance of his comrades is M. Barbusse enabled to speak as he does in the concluding chapter, and also in that moment of superb magnanimity at the end of the advance when the dignified Bertrand permits himself to say, "It was necessary," and adds that immaculate tribute, "There is one figure that has risen above the war and will blaze with the beauty and strength of his courage. . . ."

It was necessary! One does not doubt that M. Barbusse has himself said so, in the face of all it means. But in the domicile that his mind gives this war there is no mysticism, no patriotism, no acquiescence. He knows that the war is evil. He has accepted it as the lesser of two evils. His book is great because it is able to encompass everything, even the necessity of living by dying.

October 27, 1917.

THE WAYS OF WAR

A CLOUD of almost indescribable feeling is aroused by this memorial of T. M. Kettle. If it is by symbols that men are most greatly influenced, the death of Kettle at Guillamont, a lieutenant in the Dublin Fusiliers, is a symbol of more than Irish significance in the war. A death in itself, what is it? One of the most casual and commonplace accidents in the field — a wound, a cough of blood, the ebb of everything, the end. No countryman of Bernard Shaw's needs to be told how unheroic the disaster is, how unlike the fifth act of a play. Rupert Brooke gives his life to his country. How? By meningitis following a carbuncle on his upper lip. That has more the accent of piteous circumstance than the gallantry of a charge. But the most sensitive human being escapes cynicism by remembering the selection, the intention, which preceded the indignity of battle. In childbirth there is also considerable indignity for those who limit themselves to the facts.

What makes Kettle's death significant, with that significance we so bravely borrow for mortality, is the place from which he came to it out of the social and political world. Had any one said to Kettle in July, 1914, that he would die a lieutenant in the Dublin Fusiliers, the irony would have seemed inordinate. In July, 1914, he was busy buying rifles in Belgium for the National Volunteers. Mock-heroic

The Ways of War, by T. M. Kettle. Scribners, New York.

as that mission was, in the militaristic sense, it was at any rate the mission of a man who had made so important a choice for his country as to take the risks of the contraband traffic in arms. The son of a leading Parnellite Nationalist, himself a Catholic Nationalist who had quite normally taken his place as a member of parliament before he had become a professor of economics in the new state-aided Roman Catholic university, there was nothing about him to indicate the degree of sympathy with the British empire that a commission in the army suggests. It was not so much that Kettle was out of sympathy with the empire. He was, to put it bluntly, out of the empire. And the strange paradox of the war, the paradox of his death in a British uniform, was that a climax in political feeling should have completely brought him in.

Ireland out of the empire — that may seem a fantastic account of his position. To debate it were impossible without lighting up every old political cicatrix in every Catholic Nationalist's heart. It is enough to say that religious and national prejudice builds a mountain between peoples, and at the steep side of that slowly eroding mountain T. M. Kettle dwelt. "One of the most brilliant figures in the Young Ireland and the Young Europe of his time," as the prefatory note describes him, he still identified himself with the majority of his people, a people unsatisfactorily ruled, not yet allowed to rule themselves. A Catholic Irishman, there was no function for him within the imperial economy which would not impoverish his national present and estrange him from his past. "One of the most brilliant figures in Young Ireland," yes, but not seriously in Europe.

The pathos and heroism of his nationalism, as against such nationalism as Shaw's, was its vindication in the not unimportant realm of conduct, involving a costly exile from the intellectual Europe in which he properly belonged. In Dublin, as the memoir so frankly states, he was only half himself. And his writing shows well enough that, favorably environed, he would have had a development very different, would have been one of the moving and witty and superb writers of his age.

Yet when the tug came Kettle promptly enlisted and went recruiting for England, learned soldiering, did his stint in the France that he had known and appreciated, stuck to his regiment in spite of staff opportunities, saw action, led bravely, and died. Outside the glory of it, which throbs in Mrs. Kettle's admirable memoir, there is the poignant exposition of it in these articles; the quick extension of nationalism to Belgium, the valiant heady Catholicism, the romance of selflessness, the sumptuous eloquence of partisanship, the penetrating hatred of war's infidelity to humanism, the devoted tribute to common soldiers, the growing alarm that politicians could manipulate consecrated causes, the words written on the eve of death —" If I live I mean to spend the rest of my life working for perpetual peace. I have seen war, and faced modern artillery, and I know what an outrage it is against simple men."

" To be above passion is to be below humanity." With these words, and words like them, Kettle embraced the cause of the Allies. " The Great War was in its origin a Great Crime, and the documents are there to prove it." " The unchallengeable fact remains that while democracy was seeking a solution

in terms of peace, 'the old German God' forced it in terms of war." "Russia has her vile tyrannies. But from all Russian literature there comes an immense and desolating sob of humility and self-reproach. Great Britain has not yet liquidated her account with Ireland, nor altogether purified her relations with India and Egypt. But Great Britain does not, at any rate, throw aside all plain, pedestrian Christian standards as rubbish. In the Rhineland, too . . . But all the central thought of Germany has been for a generation corrupt. It has been foul with the odor of desired shambles." And the last sentences of a dispatch from Brussels, August 5th, 1914,

> It is impossible not to be with Belgium in the struggle. It is impossible any longer to be passive. Germany has thrown down a well-considered challenge to all the deepest forces of our civilization. War is hell, but is only a hell of suffering, not a hell of dishonor. And through it, over its flaming coals, Justice must walk, were it on bare feet.

So much of statecraft is cynical and diabolic, from the standpoint of human decency, that many fine men become simply anthropomorphic about it and hate the state. The best of Irishmen, "agin' the gover'ment," have inclined to this view. Since time began, if evolution means anything, the resistance of order to liberty has been resolute, with order ever tending to make liberty glamourous, to handicap legitimate growth and change, to skim power from the men who create it, to levy tribute as a toll on mere existence, to cheat the bees of their honey. There is nothing diabolic in statecraft, I suppose, that isn't as old as the hills. If the conditions of "the great

society" are new, requiring a new outfit of political devices for stimulating loyalty, the game of stimulating loyalty must still be a very old one, as old as any so-called "voluntary" movement on the part of any great mass. But once the mass becomes very vast and heterogeneous, very extended and loose, the artificiality of political devices shows up horribly, especially if their end is warfare and their means a wholesale employment of patriotically conscripted youth.

To die for a "tradition," a "principle," a "group of ideas," when your next-door neighbors have obviously different traditions and principles and groups of ideas — it is a requirement that goes astonishingly and absurdly contrary to the whole private tendency of modern times. Perhaps that tendency, which I take to be individuation, has only been superficial — a matter of numbered seats instead of a scramble, individual newspapers instead of a bellman, multiple forks and knives, personal books, personal rooms, personal bath-tubs, personal locomotives, personal inflections in everything physical, rather than a genuine intimate and scrupulous consultation of personal natures and wills. Whether superficial or deep, it has been the dominant note of free communities in our generation — a note, from the standpoint of the recruiting sergeant, that cannot too soon be quelled. To subdue personality and personal preference is the function of the recruiting sergeant. To produce a regiment is his object. And if the "noble cause" is not conspicuous when he starts on his mission — well, as General O'Ryan of New York so wittily observes, a "noble cause" can be produced by any government at any time. The individual may have

been pursuing "liberty," detesting regimentation. Suddenly, in the presence of an enemy, he is called upon to recognize the entity dictated by statecraft, to enlist or be flayed. His "noble cause" may, actually, be declared the very individuation and liberty he has striven for. His first obligation, for all that, is to defer his dividend of self. He has to commit himself, body and bones, to the statecraft that has so often betrayed him, and to give up that precious protestantism which made him feel a soldier of life. He has to espouse self-sacrifice, to admit solidarity, to pool his preferences. He has, in other words, to come in and be good.

With this surrender, this mighty abnegation, in mind, there is a weight of import in the last words that Kettle speaks before the veil descends. The scourge of war he characterizes.

> When the time comes to write down in every country a plain record of it, with its wounds and weariness, and flesh-stabbing, and bone-pulverizing, and lunatics, and rats and lice and maggots, and all the crawling festerment of battlefields, two landmarks in human progress will be reached. The world will for the first time understand the nobility, beyond all phrase, of soldiers, and it will understand also the foulness, beyond all phrase, of those who compel them into war.

But the bond of war he emphasizes. "The New Army attested to die, if need be, for the public law of Europe." And he speaks the last word on war aims.

> Either this is on our part a war into which we were forced by aggressive militarism . . . or else it is a mere struggle for domination between greedy Powers. . . . The inner disruption of the Central Alliance is never very far

from practical politics. . . . But consent to the substitution of "trade" for "honor" as our device, and mark the malign transformation. . . . The armies, to whatever new deflection their inspiration be submitted, will fight their unwavering way to victory. But it will be a victory tainted with ambiguous and selfish ends. History will write of us that we began nobly, but that our purpose corrupted. The Great War for freedom will not, indeed, have been waged in vain; that is already decided: but it will have but half kept its promises. Blood and iron will have been once more established as the veritable masters of men, and nothing will open before the world but a vista of new wars.

I received a letter from France this week that said, "Raymond Asquith lies buried at Guillamont on the Somme on the bloodstained road to Bapaume, being killed August or September about the same time and place as Tommy Kettle whose grave I searched for but did not find." From that unknown grave I am glad that Kettle speaks in the end not of Belgium, nor of Ireland, but of the power of the state, the treacheries of statecraft, the invincible significance of war aims. His blood is a pledge to democracy against "the terrorists of 'patriotism,'" his last courage a moral courage in the name of the great liberalism for which he died.

December 29, 1917.

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